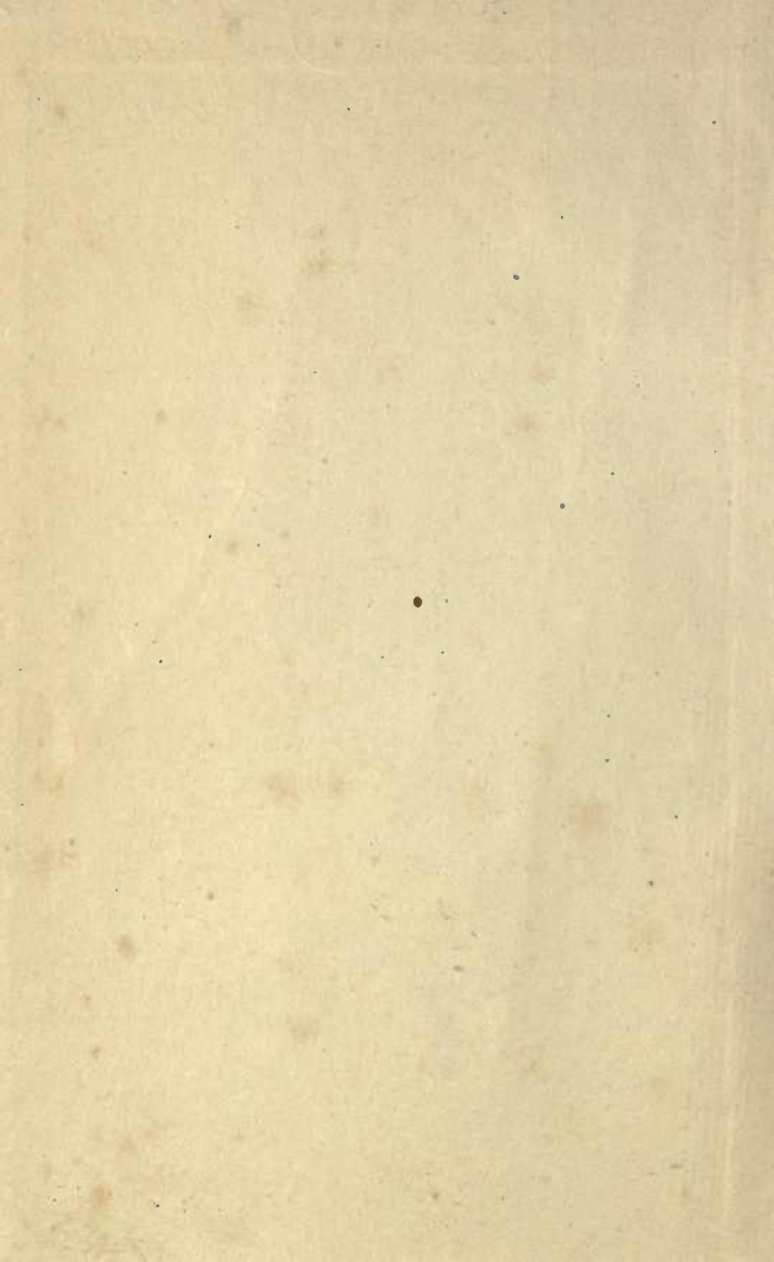


GLINT OF WINGS

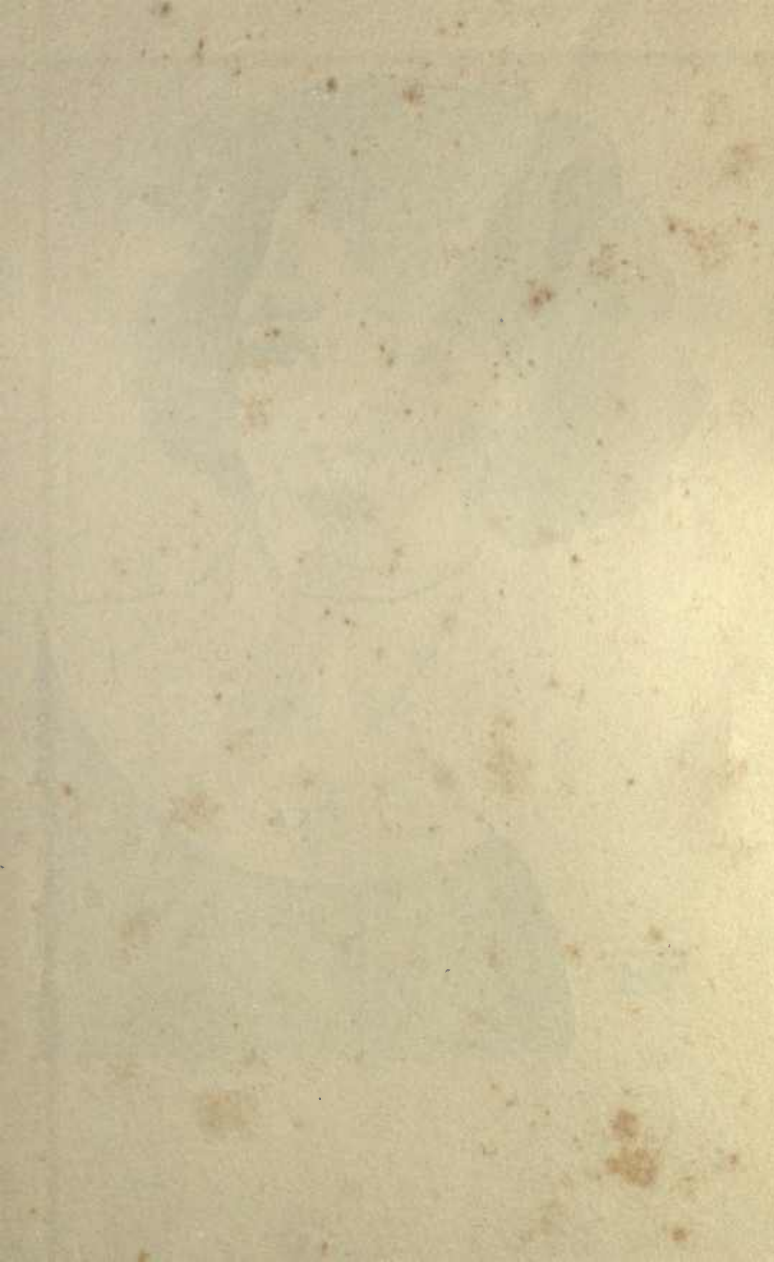
CLEVELAND MOFFETT
AND VIRGINIA HALL



GLINT
OF WINGS

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GLINT OF WINGS

*The story of a Modern Girl who
wanted her Liberty—and got it*

by
CLEVELAND MOFFETT
Author of "Possessed,"
and
VIRGINIA HALL

Drawings by Anne Moffett



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**GLINT
OF WINGS**

*The Glint of Wings in a far off sky, the glint
of something magical, enchanting,
beyond—just beyond.*

PART ONE—UNAWAKENED



GLINT OF WINGS

CHAPTER I

A LOVE LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN MAN

PATRICIA LYDIG sat on the veranda of the Inn, idling over the pages of a book. Mentally she was at war. She hated the fussy hotel guests gossiping about climate, rheumatism and food, hated the rhapsodic account of sunsets and mountains, the scandalized old ladies in their knitted shawls who looked at her, nudged one another and exuded an atmosphere of "It was not like that in our day," whenever she smoked an innocent little cigarette.

Above all she hated the thought that the Lydig family had come out to winter in California, leaving behind her beloved Manhattan Island, where all the really worth-while things in the world were gathered, in her opinion. And Mount Lowe, of all places! Home for incurable bores! What a ridiculous touristy thing to do, to come

crawling up here on that absurd little wriggling cable-car railway. Would she ever forget that awful guide with his professional patter about the beauties of nature? Really for an intelligent man her father did make the most extraordinary decisions.

"I cannot, I will not go," she had stormed when Newton Lydig announced this feature of their itinerary. "What's the use of being twenty-one if a girl still has to be dragged about against her will like a child of four?"

But she went, and, alas! here she was.

"Nothing could possibly happen in this place in a million years, and father knows it," Patricia reflected bitterly, as she lit another of her favorite Egyptians and thrust the toe of a smart brown Russian boot through the veranda rail, tilting back her chair, and grinning wickedly at an attenuated spinster who righteously averted her eyes from this symbol of modern feminine degeneracy.

"Damn!" yawned Patricia.

At this moment, suddenly, as had happened before, began one of those stormy discussions between the two Patricias (there are two of her, just as there are two of all of us) that had sometimes kept both of them agitated for days.

PATRICIA

(Who has the habit of arguing with herself at such times) Get out, Woozy!

WOOZY

No, I'm going to talk to you.

PATRICIA

Conscience! Always on my trail! What a nuisance! What have I done now? Why shouldn't I say damn! And smoke a cigarette—when I feel like it? Right out in the open instead of sneaking off to my room.

WOOZY

You know how it worries mother.

PATRICIA

Poor mother! She's so unsophisticated. All that talk of hers yesterday about religion! No wonder I lost my temper.

WOOZY

Mother is right. The trouble with you is that you have no religious belief.

PATRICIA

I have, too, in my own way. I'm more religious than most people. Up in the hills, alone by the sea I'm inspired, taken out of myself.

WOOZY

You don't seem inspired by these hills. You do nothing but grouch.

PATRICIA

I mean New York hills. I hate California—I hate everything in it—the climate that they're always bragging about and the silly little orange groves . . .

(She bites her lips as her sense of humor nearly forces her to smile, and lets her gaze rest upon a stately eucalyptus in the gardens as it sways towards a row of golden camphor trees)

WOOZY

You don't hate the sunshine, Pat?

PATRICIA

Yes, I do. It's monotonous. It's too bright. It makes all the colors crude. It spoils the green of the grass—makes it flat. I tell you that as an artist. And I *despise* the palm trees; they look like—like—

(She pauses with a wicked gleam in her eyes)
like fat Jewesses.

WOOZY

(Teasing) They must remind you of Manhattan Island. Do you despise the birds, Pat?

PATRICIA

I certainly do—nasty little things that wake you up at five in the morning.

WOOZY

There you are! You say such silly things

when you try to be clever. Besides, you hurt mother's feelings.

PATRICIA

(*Impatient*) Mother! Poor dear! She's hopelessly old-fashioned.

WOOZY

What a heartless little monster you are! You know how beautiful mother's life is—full of loving service.

PATRICIA

(*Uneasily*) She enjoys it.

WOOZY

Does she? Well, anyway, her religion amounts to something—it's based on unselfishness. But yours—the only religion you've got, Patsy Lydig, is to go after what you want.

PATRICIA

(*With decision*) I'm going after it all right, straight after it. Where does mother get off with all her unselfishness? What good does it do her? Every one walks all over her. The more unselfish a woman is the less she gets. The patient Griseldas are doormats, and I'm not going to be a Griselda.

.

At this moment a tow-headed, freckled-faced youngster came pattering up the veranda steps, pulled off a tattered cap, and thrust a letter into

Patricia's lap, muttering, "He told me to give it to you."

"He? Who?" the girl asked in surprise as she examined a square white envelope. But the urchin had gone. She could see him tearing down the trail.

Opening this missive Patricia read the most astounding love letter a girl ever received. From an entire stranger! Her cigarette went out as she read and re-read it. It began abruptly:

Do not be vexed with me for presuming to address you; some impulses are too strong to be resisted. I must speak. It is quite beyond my power to refrain from telling you that I love you above all things, above all women. I am not afraid to declare this because so great a love as mine for you is the justification of any audacity. It cannot fail, for it will never change. For a week I have watched you, yearned for you, dreamed of you—my beautiful predestined one!

Patricia laughed, teetering joyously back and forth on her chair until the observant old ladies gasped with apprehension.

"Of all the sentimental bosh! There's a catch in it." And she read on:

I have never loved before and shall never love again—except to love you. This love will fill my entire life, even if you refuse me any word. . . .

The girl stopped abruptly. "Any word! Huh!" she sniffed, but a puzzled frown puckered her brow as she turned back to the letter:

. . . even if I never have the joy of knowing you or speaking to you, I still affirm that my whole life will be glorified by this love.

All I ask of you now is a line saying that you do not deny the possibility of a miracle like this. Tie your answer to the Proposal Tree (place of miracles!), addressed to one who can and will make you happy, one who happens to be rich in this world's goods and who places all that he has and is at your sweet disposal.

STANLEY MATTHEWS.

The folded sheet rustled in Patricia's hand. Her eyes grew speculative. "What's the idea?" she asked herself again, then took account of a postscript:

I beg that you accept the enclosed invitation for yourself and friends. You will meet some of the most prominent people in the movie world at a reception after the picture.

Her lip lifted scornfully as she carelessly relit her cigarette, and sweeping past her watchful and disappointed audience, retired to her room.

II

Even Patricia with all her scorn for convention and love of daring was shocked into speechless amaze at this communication. Instinctively she crushed and crumpled the sheet in her hand. What colossal impertinence! Then, piqued by one of the phrases which half eluded her, she slowly smoothed the page out on her knee and studied it.

Preposterous as was the declaration, the letter itself carried with it an oddly convincing sincerity. It rang true. But the unparalleled audacity of him! She read and re-read it, her eyes dwelling on the signature. Stanley Matthews! In all probability he was a movie star! Yes, come to think of it, there *was* a movie star by that name, though Patricia had never seen him.

A vague impression insinuated itself into her mind, then eluded her. He said he had been watching her for a week. Could it be possible that Stanley Matthews was the tall, red-haired man with rugged face and broad shoulders whom she had caught eying her at odd times these last days? She had seen him surreptitiously watching her the first night at dinner. She had met him down by the spring, on the veranda, and again

one moonlight night she had caught a glimpse of him on a bench beneath the oak tree that fronted her room. He was smoking a pipe.

Patricia dismissed the red-haired man contemptuously and came back to the letter. Perhaps Stanley Matthews had admired her and some one of his friends had sent this as a practical joke. At which thought her dignity rose, injured and rebellious. How dared they presume!

Again the girl re-read the letter and now noticed for the first time the overlooked invitation. It was for the next day to the première presentation of a big picture—a private showing in Hollywood. That might be fun! Yes, it would be a lark to go there. She might see Charlie Chaplin or Nazimova. She would certainly go. But her parents? How could she account to them for the invitation? How overcome their objections?

Wait! She might induce one of the girls she had met at the Inn to go with her in their car and say that *she* had received the invitation. That would be a harmless deception. And this other girl would be a protection in case she *should* meet the ardent one and he dared to be presumptuous.

Subtly, almost subconsciously, Pat was flattered to have made such an overmastering appeal to a man who did not know her, a man to whom she had never spoken. At least this was a new ex-

perience. But an uneasy fear came. Was it possible her short skirts and too-red lips had, according to her father's oft-asserted theory, made this stranger mis-read her? Could he have found her Greenwich Villagy? She felt cheapened by the mere supposition. Surely there was about her—a difference, a distinction. The supreme little snob in Patsy rose with a hoity-toity lift to the chin, a damning supercilious atmosphere that said plainly: "Please notice who I am." Then disgustedly she laughed at herself as a ridiculous *poseur*. This was one of Patricia's nicest qualities, she could so often see herself as the most delicious of jokes. "Don't be a silly little it," she told herself now severely.

Anyway, Patsy decided to go to this reception and arranged the details with her new girl friend, who was delighted to assist. But when she broached the idea to her mother she met with firm opposition.

"A motion picture studio is no place for a nice girl."

"Oh, Mother, that's absurd! Girls of twenty-one aren't babies. We're much more sophisticated than you think. We know quite a lot about life."

"Your father won't hear of it, you know he won't."

"Father is so ridiculous—always assuming I'm going to make a fool of myself with some man. Heavens, those old bogey dangers! We've heard so much about them, that we are really disappointed when nothing ever happens."

"Patricia!"

"Well, we are. All this talk about girls being lured away by polished villains to live in immoral grandeur—it's just—movie stuff. We're quite able to take care of ourselves. Please, Mother, let me go."

"I'll ask your father, but you know how he objected to your Bohemian friends in New York."

Here the storm broke, Patricia being already on her nerves, and New York being a painful subject. She declared that they were treating her like a child. She was thwarted at every turn. All the joy and spontaneity were taken out of life. She might as well be in boarding school. It was a conspiracy of ceaseless, foolish surveillance. As for the reception, all her interest in it was gone now, she wouldn't go under any circumstances—not even if they let her go alone.

Of course she did not mean this, as her mother well understood when she said sorrowfully: "I will speak to your father, Patricia, and see what he thinks."

.

For a long time that night Patricia lay on her bed reflecting bitterly. If she were a boy her father would have put her through college, allowing her the choice of a profession and the money to fit herself for it; and afterwards he would have backed her up with a generous sum to start in life. Being a mere girl, however, he had chosen a profession for her, the profession of matrimony. For this he had given her "accomplishments," sent her to "finishing" schools, harnessed her to the irksome and ridiculous routine of fashionable life. *Matrimony!*

Patricia kicked off one pump and irately dug her foot into the comforter. How unreasonable men were with their daughters! Besides, she was not prepared for matrimony. If she had to pass an examination in the fundamental qualifications she would flunk flat. Instinct told her this.

"I hate their whole rotten system," she rebelled, as her other pump flew after its mate; then beating up the pillow she buried her damp, flushed face in it—meditating angrily. She did not want to marry, she wasn't going to marry—not for an age. Certainly not, if she had to take one of these epitomes of social boredom that her father had his mental eye upon. She had settled that long ago. "It's absurd," she thought. "If I should announce my engagement father would

allow me anything I want for my trousseau . . .
he would be lavish about the wedding . . .”

Patricia checked the nervous tapping of her foot against the coverlet as a thought came that held her breathless, then sent her flying across the room to her writing table.

“I’ve got it,” she exulted. “I know what I’ll do.”

CHAPTER II

PATRICIA DEMANDS HER LIBERTY

"Our society is still full of hostility against . . . females who feel the want of liberty, and are not yet ripe for it. They lack both the strength and the power for carrying on the struggle against a whole society which has doomed them. . . ."

A MAN may be a great statesman and not be able to manage his own cook; similarly and with much more reason a man may be a successful novelist and depicter of feminine emotions (which Newton Lydig was) and not be able to manage his own daughter.

"Let me think, dear," he said to his wife after listening to a distressed account of the mother's interview with Patricia.

"I feel that it's a very serious moment, Newton. We mustn't make any mistake."

"Please let me think," repeated the father with a touch of impatience, for, if the truth must be told, he had known vaguely for months that an issue like this with his daughter must soon be

faced; he ought to have been ready for it—but was not.

"I'll come back later," the mother sighed, and left the master of the house to his perplexed meditations.

The novelist's eyes rested upon Patricia's face on his desk before him, two faces in their Russia-leather case, for two were necessary to suggest the contradictions in their daughter's loveliness; one, a profile showing the flower-like grace of her head in its glory of coiled hair, the purity of her features, the child-like candor of her eyes; the other, full-face and equally beautiful, but languid and sophisticated, the *femme du monde*, revealing in her clear, keen gaze the understanding of centuries, artificial, arrogant . . . yet somehow strangely appealing.

Patricia was twenty-one (her birthday had come only a few weeks before) and for months she had been dreaming of this time and of what it would mean to her. At twenty-one she would have her liberty. At twenty-one she would burst forth wonderfully from irksome bonds and restraints. At twenty-one she would cut off her hair (to cite one small privilege firmly denied and intensely longed for) if she still felt like it. At twenty-one she would smoke cigarettes unabashed

before her disapproving father. And a thousand other things!

Now she was twenty-one!

Lydig saw that this was not a case where he could nonchalantly shrug fatherly shoulders and shift his responsibility in the usual masculine way by saying, "Well, well, after all she's a girl and her mother can manage her better than I can." Her mother could not do this alone. Pat was his own daughter, part and parcel of his youthful egotism, his love of adventure carried to the point of recklessness; also of his proneness to experiment with life's enticing secrets, of his courage . . . even when this led, alas! to agonizing remorse.

Thinking as a psychologist, not as a father, Lydig understood how these young women of the on-coming generation feel about their liberty. They feel very much as men feel, that is, they care supremely about it, and propose to have it, or some of it, at almost any cost. Real liberty—to go and come as they please, to enjoy themselves as they please, to face life as they please, even at the risk of mistakes and misadventures. He understood that an intelligent and high-spirited girl in her early twenties finds it irksome to be always . . . always watched over, chaperoned, generally interfered with by her parents. Nor is she neces-

sarily ready to marry merely to escape this guardianship. *He* didn't want to marry either at twenty-one. Naturally a girl much prefers to drift along for a few years in the care-free spirit of youth, exulting in the growing consciousness of her womanly power, her beauty . . . waiting for the hero of her dreams to appear, exploring, unhindered, this path or that in the garden of life's fascinations that encompasses her. Unhindered! That was the point. Fathers and mothers (however sincerely loved) may become a hindrance. Even a husband would be a hindrance in certain explorations and investigations that a modern girl longs to make. She thinks of a husband—later; of children—later; for the moment she is taken up with her new rôle as a fearless and independent force in this age of women's emancipation. She realizes her power, and proposes to make the most of this—exactly as men have made the most of their power for centuries.

Liberty! That is exactly what the novelist himself had demanded when he was twenty-one. How clearly he remembered that year of his rebellion—he was twenty-three—when he broke away from the stifling dullness and narrowness of teaching school and set sail for Paris, cutting loose his eager bark from its old respectable moorings, letting it drift boldly forth into the shining

river of adventure. Paris and journalism! Paris and excitement! *Vive la joie!*

But now when his daughter asked for *her* liberty, he protested that this could not be accorded; she was not ready for it—the thing was impossible. Why? He even called her ungrateful, unreasonable for making this demand. *Why?*

The obvious answer was that he feared the mistakes that she might make, and was not willing to let her risk making such mistakes, simply because she was a girl, and a girl's mistakes are not to be trifled with; this was evidently the position that all conservative fathers would take. On the other hand . . .

Patricia was fundamentally fine, Lydig was sure of that, an incurable idealist, hiding lovely maidenly dreams behind a mask of worldliness. A fearless, intelligent young woman, but not yet ready to go her way unguided, not yet ready to enjoy the Liberty—with a big L—that she clamored for. Her knowledge of life and of human nature was a pathetic half-knowledge, fed by daring "modern" books that she only half understood, by plausible *poseurs* whom she adored meeting and whose brilliant but preposterous views of feminine duty and destiny only served to confuse her.

By the way, where was that absurd essay

of Pat's that he had come upon accidentally the other day? An essay written a year or two ago that had a bearing on the present situation. Ah! He remembered, and presently produced from a drawer some pages bearing this intriguing title in red ink, "On Being Bad," by Patricia Lydig. Frowning, the father ran his eyes over a paragraph of this sufficiently daring composition: "It is just as dreary to stand on one's head all the time as to snore through one's days in a rocking chair. My present ideal is to never get so flabby as to be unable at intervals to rouse myself with a shout and a somersault or two from the lethargy of routine, and then return, disheveled but grinning, to rock docilely and dream. Shaw says, 'every step of progress means a duty repudiated,' and whether this be true or not, I know that, for me, it is during my interludes of indecorum that Life has been most alive and throbbing."

Interludes of indecorum! Good heavens! There was the modern girl who called herself intellectual because she had read the foolish books of some cynical Englishman who thought nothing of the harm he might do, so long as he achieved a cheap popularity. What if Pat should put her trust in one of these studio prattlers! Poor child! What if she should elect to build the

altar of her love beside some burned-out soul who might appreciate her beauty!

Lydig thought back through the months and recalled his shock of surprise that night in New York (it was only three months ago) when, having dropped in at the Red Lion cabaret after the theater, he had caught sight of Patricia at a gay table, seated between two men who, for all their well-bred appearance, were evidently followers of pleasure! In the group were two other women, one the hostess, Mrs. K——, a rich and restless widow who spent half her time in Paris, the other a beautiful creature from the stage who had achieved a recent vogue and who now, daringly appareled, was a center of attention. Patricia explained it all afterward in an agitated scene. Her mother knew about this invitation. Mrs. K—— was a perfectly respectable person. They had gone to the theater, then to the Red Lion for supper, just as Lydig himself had gone, just as everybody went. She was not responsible for Mrs. K——'s guests, was she? The men were perfectly all right; one of them, as her father knew, was a serious bacteriologist—he had played golf with him. So what was the harm? They surely didn't object to the dancing, did they? After all she wasn't a little girl any longer. And so on.

But the memory of that scene haunted the father. He knew the significance of it. He had read the alluring message of that vamp lady's cruel, beautiful eyes as she fixed them on the flushed, eager face of his daughter . . . and lifted her glass! And those men! With their smug respectability! Their red-faced, coldly-appraising glances! It was intolerable. He could not bear it. He had decided to make a change. They must do something to draw Patsy away from these Bohemian or near-Bohemian influences in New York that evidently attracted her strongly. And Helen, with a mother's wisdom, agreed with him when they had talked it over. They would try a season away from Manhattan Island, a season in California, where Patsy might find herself amid saner surroundings, and where they all might benefit. So they had come out here and he had taken this charming apartment in Pasadena with a separate suite for Patricia, where they were to settle down for six months or so—to catch their breath, as it were, and make a new start.

And now at the very moment of their arrival had come this unfortunate invitation (perhaps the first of many!) that would lead Patsy into even less desirable surroundings than those she had left behind. A reception of motion picture people! Screen stars! At Hollywood, of all places!

No! Decidedly no! That would be jumping from the frying pan into the fire! He might as well put his foot down decidedly and settle this thing once and for all. Patricia was not to accept any invitations of that character.

He forbade it.

CHAPTER III

PATRICIA'S ULTIMATUM

MEANTIME, the daughter, roused to action and ready to face the issue with her father that was now inevitable, had lighted the shaded electric lamp at her desk and ransacked the pigeon holes for paper. Then with her feet curled chummily about the round of her chair and her left hand running through her hair until it stood high and wild from her forehead, Patricia composed this letter:

DEAR FATHER: As I always cry when we have arguments together and so lose out, I'm going to write down a few plain facts for you to think about. Then you can write me your opinion just as if I were an outsider who had made you a business proposition.

Suppose, Father, that I had been a boy. You would have taken great pride and spared no expense in preparing me for a career in life, wouldn't you? You would have trained me from earliest childhood to decide things for myself and you would have respected my inclinations and ambitions. And backed me up financially until I got

started, wouldn't you? My success would have been your success.

Patricia considered these two paragraphs approvingly. With her elbows dug into the desk and her hands supporting her head, she gazed thoughtfully off into space, then went back to her task with eyes brightening as the ideas came. Her pen scratched on:

But because I'm a girl you take no account of my individuality. You think there is only one thing for me to do—get married, and only one way to get married—your way. Well, I don't agree with you. I hate this silly tip-toeing along in life that you are forcing on me. I want to shake hands with life, face to face. When I meet a real man and love him, I suppose I'll marry him, if he wants me; but there's no hurry about that. I despise the poor little excuses for men that I meet in our "best society." Those bored and fastidious veterans of the stag-line! With their oiled hair! I'm sure they are greedy and lazy and coarse when they're not on exhibition. It isn't maidenly to think about that, but girls do. Unfortunately, we are rational creatures, rather like men!

Patricia cocked her head to one side and chuckled. "That's true," she reflected, and, dropping her fountain pen into the ink bottle until it clicked, she warmed to her composition:

If I should tell you to-night that I am engaged to Mr. Willy Proper and want—oh, quite a snug little sum for my trousseau, you would give me the money gladly, now wouldn't you? Well, I'm not engaged, and I'm not asking for money for a trousseau, but, Father, I ask you, I beg you to take a chance on my discretion and ability, as you would with a son, and advance me even half the price of a trousseau and a smart wedding and let me go back to New York, get an apartment and try to make some sensible use of my talents. Can't you gamble on me to that extent? Won't you trust me? I can draw and design and write a bit and I *know* I can accomplish something worth while, if I have a chance. Please, Father! Help me to be proud of being a woman, not resentful about it.

It's no use to say that I can do my work here at home. I can't. I'm too comfortable at home. I'm sunk up to my eyes in indolence. I've got to get away where I'll be forced to stand on my own feet. I've got to show what I'm good for in the labor market.

By this time the girl's cheeks were flushed with her deep seriousness. She wondered why she had not thought of writing before. Stanley Matthew's letter had suggested the idea to her. He had served that purpose at any rate. She ran on:

Come, Father, be original. Set an example to all the other foolish fathers who think that the only proper and lady-like occupations for nice girls (as an interlude be-

tween graduation and matrimony) are library work or teaching school. Ugh! Besides, I couldn't teach school. I must use the gifts I have.

"Now for the direct appeal," thought the girl. She tapped the end of her pen meditatively against her even white teeth. "I must strike *hard*." She began several sentences, then ended with:

Give me my trousseau in dollars, Father. Let me spend for myself, according to my own ideas, what you are spending for me. Let me invest it, as I want to, in my talents. Later on I'll pay you dividends in achievements that you will be proud of; and I'll buy my own trousseau for my own kind of a husband, if I ever find him. I've been a leaner all my life. Don't make me go on being a leaner. *If you won't listen to me now, Father, I'll do something we both may regret.* And eventually I'll go back to New York anyway. I'm not putting any trimming of sweet words about these facts,—I want you to face them boldly and honestly.

YOUR PAT.

There was a litter of little crumpled paper balls, discarded approximations to her thought, about Patricia's chair when she had finished. She considered this labored attempt reflectively for a moment, then addressed and sealed the letter. And put a stamp on it. Then she smoothed her

hair, searched for her pumps, picked them up on her toes and slipped into them, threw a big coat over her negligée and mailed the letter in the box under the oak tree. After which she hurried back to her room.

Thrilling now at the thought that the issue with her father was definitely joined, yet vaguely anxious, sleepless, Patricia went to the window and stared out into the night, out upon the oak-shadowed slope that stretched away below. And there again, placidly smoking his pipe, was that inevitable, impertinent, ridiculous man with his fateful face and red hair. Petulantly she turned away and drew down the shade.

II

The final clash between father and daughter came the next evening in the most decorous setting, when the Lydig family drew around a flower-spread table in the spacious dining-room of the Inn.

Patricia did not expect the climax so soon, not knowing that a conscientious, bespectacled clerk had sorted the mail for the postman, waylaid her letter to her father, and put it in his box. The reading of this business-like communication had shocked Lydig into concentrated atten-

tion, awakening in him deep resentments, uneasiness, exasperation. And yet . . . what she wrote was true in the main! Good Lord! Why did men marry and have daughters! Girls were certainly too much for any mere male to handle!

While the perplexed father studied this appeal, Patricia was powdering her nose in a near-by dressing-room, inspecting her hair from all angles in a hand-mirror, and adjusting the blouse of her French lingerie frock. Father and mother were already seated when Pat sailed into the dining-room, exuberant with health and radiantly lovely in her orchid color scheme.

"Don't order soup for me," she said cheerfully, as her father pondered over the menu card, settled the momentous question of dinner and dispatched an obsequious waiter. He then turned to his daughter with a resolute, paternal air.

"Pat," he began abruptly, "I have your letter."

Patricia jumped. This swift action was disconcerting. "Please, Father," she said anxiously, "don't answer until you have thought it over. Not now!"

His eyes were fixed on her, cold and grave, through his big, round spectacles, and Pat saw that there was to be no delay for a written reply. The issue was to be in immediate words. She braced herself to meet it.

"I really can't understand your writing such a letter, Patricia," he said.

"Why?" asked the girl. "Isn't it true?"

"Yes, in part," he admitted. "It sounds reasonable, but, Pat, theory and fact are very different. A young man can afford to make a few mistakes in getting started in life, but a young woman cannot. Her happiness and success, as things are now, depend to a great extent upon her making a desirable marriage."

"That's always at the back of your thought, Father—to get me married. You seem to think that any old husband is better than none." The girl flung out the words resentfully.

"Well, with marriage a woman gets her independence, my dear."

"Does she? Not always. Anyway, it's foolish to tell a girl she can't have her independence until she is married. You might as well tell her she can't vote until she's married."

"That's entirely different. A woman can be happy if she never votes. But if she does anything that interferes with her marriage—"

"It doesn't interfere with her marriage for a girl to be usefully occupied, does it? If I had my liberty, in some career, I'd be in a way to meet men—a different kind of men . . ."

"Exactly, that's what I want to avoid."

"I mean a better kind of men—workers, not society snips."

"A girl alone in New York can't tell what kind of men she will meet."

"Now you're coming back to these stage villains! I tell you there aren't any, Father. And if there should be one or two queer specimens escaped from a dime-novel, we'd know how to deal with them."

Lydig's hands closed angrily as he recognized the futility of masculine argument.

"Let me tell you something about villains, Patsy," he said quietly. "There *are* some in real life, but often they don't know it. They are well-intentioned persons who don't mean to be villains—until the occasion arises. That's why it's important to keep the occasion from arising. The French know that, they keep their daughters sheltered until marriage."

"Sheltered? They make prisoners of them, and what's the result—after marriage? Read their books and you'll find out."

"They may go to the other extreme, but every American father will agree with me," Lydig was speaking now with increasing warmth, "that an attractive girl who makes a practice of, let us say, going to gay studio parties where she may be alone with some man whom she likes, some man

who likes her—I don't care if he's the best man living—that girl isn't safe."

"You're not complimentary to your own sex, Father, and what you say about modern girls is—insulting."

"I'm sorry, but I must act according to my best judgment, Patsy, and I can't see you living in New York alone. You're not ready."

"And I never will be in your opinion," choked the girl. "I'll never be grown-up and responsible, not even when I am forty and done for. Oh! I can see it's just no use. You won't be reasonable." She was at the point of tears.

"Do you really think me unreasonable?"

"I certainly do. You've lived with artistic people all your life, in New York and in Paris. You write your books and plays as you please and allow no one to bore you. You are Newton Lydig! When you feel like it you consort with all sorts of clever Bohemians; but you've never wanted me to know them. I'm a pretty little piece of bric-a-brac to be kept in cotton wool, according to the nice safe standard of Miss Spence's School and Park Avenue, and marry some stupid millionaire out of the social register. Well, I'm not going to do it."

The father remained silent, drumming with his fingers in time to the balcony orchestra which was

playing "Ain't We Got Fun," while a deferential, white-clad waiter served filet of sole *a la menunière* and corn on the cob and the mother listened in growing apprehension. There was justice enough in Patsy's agitated defiance to disconcert her father for a moment. It was true he had tried to shield his daughter from undesirable influences, and having no fortune to leave, he had favored what is called an advantageous marriage. After all, the standards of Miss Spence's School are not so bad, and, other things being equal, the novelist preferred Park Avenue to Sixth Avenue or Lexington Avenue. Why not? A man is not necessarily a fool because he has money, and the average successful business man is quite as worthy of a woman's love and respect as a correspondingly successful artistic person. Rather more so, for men in the latter class, Lydig had found, those glittering Bohemians that Patsy dreamed about, are usually vain and irresponsible and make the worst husbands in the world. Let a girl sigh over them from a safe distance, adore their photographs, treasure their autographs, yearn over their pages, but for Heaven's sake, let her marry some one else.

"Patricia!" reproached her mother.

"I don't mean to be disrespectful, Mother,

but—" the girl held her ground valiantly, "there are certain things that ought to be said." She eyed her father steadily.

"Yes," he agreed, "and they may as well be said now."

Then came the final phase of this discussion which continued across the table, quietly and pleasantly enough, as far as outward manifestations went; nevertheless things were said that altered the course of several lives.

On the whole, until the very end, Patricia was more controlled than her father, who, accustomed to the habit of authority, found it hard to deal with her on a basis of strict intellectual equality. His tendency was to demand of her the subservience of a dutiful daughter (as when she was little) who must accept whatever Father said as incarnate wisdom. This put him at a disadvantage because he was conscious of a certain arbitrariness in himself and was exasperated by it.

"As I understand it then, Patricia," he concluded with hardening eyes, "you stand on the terms of your letter. You demand your entire liberty?"

"Yes."

"To go and come as you please?"

"Exactly."

"To know and frequent such people as you happen to fancy?"

"Yes."

"For example, if a man invites you to dinner and the theater you claim the right to accept his invitation whether your mother and I know anything about the man or not? Do you?"

"I—I suppose I do."

"And to come home with him after the theater, perhaps after supper—say at one o'clock in the morning—alone with him?"

"There is no harm in that, Father. Everybody does it. That's why I want to go back to New York, so these little things won't worry you."

"Little things!" He was silent for a moment, trying to say nothing he would be sorry for afterward.

"I can't consent to that, Patricia, not while you are dependent upon us."

The girl eyed him without flinching as she felt the situation grow more tense.

"I—I hope to earn money by my writing—if you'll only be patient until I get started," she pleaded.

"When will that be? How much can you earn? Don't you see how uncertain it all is? Don't you feel that you should respect our wishes, our preju-

dices, if you like, at least until you are married or self-supporting? Don't you, Patsy?"

He tried to make his words tenderly appealing, but they sounded harsh and uncompromising to his daughter. He seemed to be taking a sordid advantage of his miserable money. Her self-control broke and her anger flamed out.

"No, I don't! I have my own life to live and I'm going to live it in my own way, just as you lived your life in your way, and I think it's very unkind of you to—"

"Patricia! Stop!" interposed the mother, who saw with distress that the quarrel had reached a point where irreparable harm would be done.

And Patricia, tingling with a sense of wrathful self-vindication, stopped, not because of this warning, but because at that moment, by a strange fatality, a call boy, wearing yellow glasses and walking very straight, came briskly down the length of tables calling out with painstaking distinctness: "Mister Stan-ley Matthews." And again as he came nearer: "*Mis-ter Stan-ley Matthews!*"

CHAPTER IV

"I'M GOING TO WIN HER"

HERE was a coincidence. While Patricia and her father were arguing over the abstract question of a girl's liberty, there at another table within twenty feet of them sat the man who was destined to influence Patsy decisively in her effort to achieve this liberty—the man with the awkward, powerful body and the shock of reddish hair. The man who had written that incredible love letter, Stanley Matthews! There he was watching the lady of his adoration. All through the meal he had been watching her, talking about her to his companion, a fat, jolly-looking, red-faced individual who listened in patient astonishment to Stan's sentimental outpourings.

"If it was anybody else but you, old boy, who was giving me this line of love-at-first-sight stuff, I'd say he was plain nuts. I'd have him fired from the company. I'd tell the governor, as a conscientious director, that he was unsafe and unfit

to be the hero of a million-dollar serial. I would—sure as my name is Dodd."

Stanley answered with an engaging and transforming smile that revealed an unusual, rather aloof personality. "That's all right, Hammy, I don't know why I've taken an old cynic like you into my confidence. Your seared and calloused soul can no more understand my feelings than—"

Dodd laughed in a shrill falsetto that contrasted grotesquely with his massive bulk. "What's worrying my seared and calloused soul is the vision of what this fool infatuation is going to do to your work. Get over it, Stan. Have somebody introduce you to her and you'll find she's just an ordinary pretty girl like all the rest of 'em."

"No! Oh, no! She's different, totally different. Thank God, I have true intuitions. I know what I'm talking about."

Dodd stared in mystified incomprehension. There was something in Stanley's earnestness and quiet power that took away any facetious impulse.

"Do you mean to tell me a man can love a woman when he's never spoken to her?"

"Yes. I've done it." Stan turned towards the Lydig table and his eyes rested on the fair young girl who was all unconscious of his gaze. "I love her beyond everything in the world. She is going

to be my wife or—or I'll never have a wife."

Hamilton Dodd was stunned into a sort of rough sympathy. "I certainly wish you luck, my boy, but—what's the plan? What's your next move?"

"I don't know. I sent her a note telling her how I feel. I'm waiting for my answer."

"Telling her how you feel? You didn't have the nerve to—to say you love her?"

"I certainly did."

"Good Lord! When she don't know who you are? When she's never seen you?"

"Yes."

"You signed your name to it?"

"I did."

"She'll think you're crazy! You *are* crazy. You don't know a thing about her."

Stan's face had taken on an almost inspired look. "I know everything about her—more than she knows about herself."

"Huh! A week ago you hadn't heard of her?"

"I have known her—always!"

Dodd sniffed at this mystical utterance and remarked, after studying the Lydig group where discord was fast developing: "If any one should ask me, I'd say the little lady has a damned lively temper."

The star reached out impulsively and laid a

hand on his friend's shoulder. "Hammy, I'm a lonely fellow. I don't fit in very well with this movie crowd. I don't have much to do with them—you know that."

"It's just as well you don't, with such tender susceptibilities," grinned the director. "Without jollyng, Stan, I must hand it to you that you've never fallen for any of our vamp queens. And I guess you've had chances enough—with your face spread over all the bill-boards in creation on twenty-four-sheet posters."

"I've never cared for a woman," answered Matthews simply.

"And now you're going to make up for it, eh?"

The star went on meditatively: "I'm not much on looks. No nice ways. No tact or *savoir faire*. And a horrible dresser, Hammy. It doesn't matter how much I pay for a suit of clothes, it looks like the devil as soon as I get into it. I'm exactly the kind of a man Patricia Lydig wouldn't care for,—unless—"

"Patricia Lydig! She's got a swell name."

"She's an aristocrat and—I'm a plebeian; but, Hammy, I'm going to win her. It's fate. God knows I'm not conceited, only—there are forces in us so strong that, when they are concentrated on only one thing, *they cannot be resisted.*"

The director was more and more impressed. "Say, boy, we tough old fellows go kidding along—don't show our feelings much, but—if there's any little thing I can do—"

"Thanks, Hammy. There's one thing you can do—it will be a comfort. I'm worried about—*this!* I can win that girl, I know it. I'm so sure I can win her that—the only question is whether I have a right to do it, whether it's exactly—fair."

"Fair?"

"I mean to her. She won't love me in the ideal way, not at first. She won't love me as I love her."

"If she don't love you, she'll turn you down."

"No! She'll do whatever I want her to do. I say that because—there's something tremendous—I'll show you. I never tried this, but I *know* I can do it. That girl is absorbed in talking to her father. Her back is turned, isn't it? Now watch! I'm going to look at her—in a certain way—it isn't anything cheap, like hypnotism, it's just *speaking to her!* Now!"

Stan fixed his eyes on Patricia with a strange intensity and sat quite still. He breathed deeply and his nostrils dilated. A few moments later the young woman shifted uneasily, then turned squarely around and cast a perplexed glance to-

wards the table of the two men. But she saw only Hamilton Dodd, for at that instant Stanley, following an unexplainable impulse, leaned to one side so that he was hidden from the girl's view by one of the massive brown columns. And a few seconds later, as if to complete the coincidence, the yellow-spectacled call boy shouted out: "Mister Stan-ley Matthews!"

"That beats anything I ever saw," mused Dodd. "Hello!" He turned in surprise as he saw that his friend had slipped away, unnoticed, and passed out through a screen door that shut off the reading room. There he stood beckoning.

"I don't want her to see me yet, Hammy," Stan explained, and led the way to one of the long windows facing the west where the Malibu Hills tower above the Pacific. He stood there in awed silence before a spread of flaming, deepening sunset, marked here and there with patches of azure and pale green.

"Some good omen, I'll say," commented the director.

Stan's face brightened extraordinarily as he drank in the glory of the colors. "Yes! I believe in omens."

"You're going to land her, boy. Anything you set your heart on, you get. Remember how you

broke into the movie game—when you made that jump that Morgenstein was afraid of? Remember Rajah—in the stockade—do you?”

Stanley Matthews did not answer, but stood lost in grave reverie, his eyes held by the glory of the sunset. When he spoke it was in a tone of sad half-shy self-revelation.

“It makes me ashamed, Hammy, when you talk like that. I’m not brave. I was scared to death when I jumped off that bridge. I was scared to death when I unbolted the door of that stockade. And”—he hesitated with a sensitive quiver of the lips—“I’m scared to death now, but—”

Hamilton Dodd stared at him. “For the love of Mike—what for?”

“I’m afraid I’m going at this thing—too hard.”

“You mean the girl?”

“Yes, but I can’t help it. It’s my destiny. ‘For better, for worse,’ I’m going to do it. I want her—too much!”

His eyes were still fixed in the west. His lips moved slowly as he said with a sort of fierce reverence, seeming to call upon that golden and purple splendor to witness his vow: “I’m going to win her.”

CHAPTER V

THE PROPOSAL TREE

THE clash of wills had come between Patricia and her father; the girl had thrown down the gauntlet, demanded her liberty, and had been refused. Lydig had said to his daughter what any modern father would seem justified in saying: "No, my dear child, as long as I support you, as long as you owe everything to your mother and to me, I expect you to give reasonable consideration to our wishes and opinions touching your behavior."

He had said this kindly, but firmly, and Patsy had answered with a virtual defiance. If her parents persisted in thwarting her wishes and telling her what she might and might not do, she would take the law into her own hands and work out her own salvation.

But how was this to be accomplished? How could she carry out her threat? What about money? She could not get it from her father, and, even if she could, she had too much pride to

ask for it. Yet without money she could do nothing. It would cost her two hundred dollars, for example, merely to get to New York, and, if she managed to get there, then what? How could she live?

Patricia was one of thousands of American girls who from babyhood have received "advantages" that often in the end prove to be disadvantages. For, in spite of their society experience, their smattering of art, French, music, biology, zoölogy, sociology, physics, civics and other cultural things that they have "had" in our select private schools (and promptly forgotten), these charming young ladies have never learned to support themselves; they can do nothing well enough to be paid for it in the open market; often they can do nothing that would even lift them out of the ranks of unskilled labor. Nevertheless they demand their independence, plus a bank account.

These girls ought to be the radiant flower of our national young womanhood, since everything that love and care can suggest has been done for them, but, alas! they are restless and dissatisfied, openly or secretly rebellious—most of them.

So it was with Patricia who now for the first time in her life found herself in a position where

she must either "make good" through her own efforts or acknowledge that much of her confident talk had been mere bravado. What was she going to do?

All through the day following the family disagreement Patsy labored over this problem with a maddening sense of her own helplessness in the face of material necessities. There must be *some* way for her to justify her existence, to show her father that she was not a mere talker; but what?

Late in the afternoon, baffled but determined, the girl took to the mountain trail for inspiration. It lured her on with treacherous mauve shadows that promised unspeakable wonders just beyond, but changed at her approach, leaving bare, scarred, sage-covered hills. Money? Where was she to get the money that would open for her the door of freedom?

Suddenly, she became aware of voices and discovered two girls, blondine and made-up like savages, who were pinning white slips of paper to a low, wide-spreading tree close to the trail some feet below. She drew near and stared curiously. All the branches were ticketed with little notes, like a Christmas tree alight with candles! Ah, of course! This must be the Proposal Tree that the amazing Stanley Matthews had referred to.

What a preposterously sentimental idea! Could he actually have hoped that she would pin an answer here?

Leaping down the steep bank, she precipitated herself before the two fantastic strangers who greeted her genially, unconscious of their blue and yellow grease paint.

"Hello!" exclaimed one. "Come after a proposal?"

"Proposal?" Patsy hazarded, pretending ignorance. Could they be members of the movie company that was headed by her unknown suitor?

The other shrilled in glee. "She isn't on! The guide must have neglected his *dooty*. 'Why this, ladies and gents,' " she gave a creditable imitation, " 'is the *Proposal Tree*. Just pin your bid for a husband on one of these branches, and he'll be handed over.' "

"We're fishing for our star, Stan Matthews," giggled the first one, "but there's no landing him."

Patricia pricked up her ears.

"Making pictures here?"

"Yep, just up the trail. Rest of the company will be along soon—Stan with 'em. We'd better beat it."

Which they presently did, leaving the newcomer to her somber thoughts.

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The sun went down. The sky crimsoned. The air grew sharp and penetrating, warning that darkness would fall swiftly. Patricia reviewed that angry scene with her father and now an idea struck her only to be dismissed; but it came back temptingly. Why not? Her parents took it for granted that she was a foolish little thing, why not *be* foolish? Why not answer Stanley Matthews' letter and have the satisfaction of knowing that her father, by his unreasonableness, had driven her into doing this, the very thing that she had decided not to do? Now she *would* answer the letter!

She drew nearer the Proposal Tree, her heart beating absurdly, and, following an impulse that had now become irresistible, she traced Stanley Matthews' name on a piece of paper, penciled under it a crazy little caricature of herself and signed her initials. Circling the tree, she chose her branch with care, first stringing the paper onto a long scarlet silk tie, of which she divested herself, and sent it a-flutter. Then at the sound of footsteps on the trail, and deep resonant voices, Pat took to her heels and ran.

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An hour later Patricia came down to dinner in a meek gray silk gown that her father approved, and played up to his idea of the cut-paper-pattern

daughter; but before the meal was over she regretted her idiocy at the Proposal Tree and made up her mind to go after that bit of compromising paper just as soon as the moon would "oblige."

The moon rose late, the guests retired early, so Pat had the trail to herself when she slipped away. An unearthly quiet brooded over the hills and cañons. Eerie night sounds made her start every few seconds—the soft whirr of some bird disturbed on its nest, the hoot of an owl, a loosened rock rushing down a shale-covered precipice.

As she reached the Proposal Tree a blood-curdling yelp cut the intense stillness of the night, transfixing her with horror. A wild vision of a California mountain lion came to her, and as she turned to flee she found herself face to face with *the man*, the sandy-haired individual who had haunted her movements and her imagination.

"It's only a coyote," he said with quiet seriousness, not wasting breath on preliminaries. The girl had a suspicion that he wanted to laugh, but would not have done so for worlds.

She took a quick inventory of this stranger, checked off his bigness, the sincere ring of his voice, his clean-shaven, irregular, emphatic features, and squarely-set eye. She chose him in preference to the coyote.

"Come along," he said with fine disregard of the girl's unknown wishes, as she hesitated, toward him. "We'll explore this trail a bit farther. But wait! . . ." he turned, unknotted the fluttering tie and, after chuckling over the caricature of Patricia, folded it neatly, ready for his pocket.

Patsy snatched at it childishly. "Give it to me—it's mine," she protested in a feeble, sharp-edged soprano that had no chance against his lordly baritone: "Say, hands off, please. This is *mine!* You see I'm Stanley Matthews."

CHAPTER VI

THE HUSBAND OF HER DREAMS

THE next morning Patricia awoke with an anticipatory start. Just what . . . then she remembered. This preposterous man—Stanley Matthews! There was something about his assertive personality that fascinated her. His eyes were absurdly full of candor, at times they shone and danced like a youngster's. A fine strong face, but overhung by that shock of thick reddish hair, her particular abomination. Patsy had often declared that she would rather die an old maid than have a red-headed husband. Wait! Where was that joyous description she had amused herself by writing a year or so ago of the husband of her dreams?

Chuckling at this remembrance, Patricia leaped out of bed and, searching through the disorder of her bureau drawers, came upon a leather-bound note book wherein were several pages of her dashing handwriting under this title, "The Great Unknown," and beginning:

"In the first place, he must be taller than I—

the taller the better—so I can tell that he's there when we dance; so that when he kisses me I can know the glorious expanding feeling of having to reach to get my arms around his neck; and at the same time, paradoxically, have the sensation of being entirely surrounded and cut off from the rest of the universe by him."

"All right so far, friend Stanley," she smiled at this exuberance. "You're tall enough, but I guess that's about the end of your qualifications." And she read on:

"I want him to be the kind of person who will inspire all girls to clutch each other and exclaim, 'My dear, isn't he *too* divine!' whom all men will admire and desire to meet; whom all servants will dote on (this will make it so much easier for me); who will delight the souls of all children, dogs and casual old women.

"I prefer him to be dark rather than blond; however, I only demand that he shan't be red-headed. Red-headed men always get scarlet, and blotchy, and blistered, and repulsive when they sunburn; and they swarm with big scrawly freckles like red ants."

"There! I told you so," she exulted. "You see you'll *never* do, Mr. Matthews. Never!" She read on, amused at this modest summary of her matrimonial requirements:

"I want him to have good taste in furniture, books, music, art, plays, movies; be able to drive any kind of car; play bridge, golf, tennis; ride the wildest horse with baffling ease and distinction; understand all about baseball, politics, stocks and bonds, and whatever junk it might be useful for me to know about sometime.

"I want him to be a stalwart boxer too, so that he could knock down any man whatsoever who might offend me. Nothing would thrill me more than to have such an occasion arise. Also, though I don't require it, almost more than anything else I'd love to have him be able to sing in a nice, deep, husky voice that catches one inside. Then, sometimes in the evening he could strum on a banjo or Hawaiian guitar, and sing queer, amusing, delectable songs, while I'd lounge at his feet, with lots of cushions at my back, draw fantastic pictures, drink orangeade, and adore him."

"I suppose my ardent one wins out on the stalwart boxer requirement," she mused, "but when it came to good taste—O Great Gopher Prairie!"

Then, skimming a few paragraphs, Patricia came to this:

"In conclusion, I want a husband who has led a life of adventure, I don't care whether he got expelled from six schools, or ran away to Paris,

or joined a circus, or lived as a tramp, but he must have done *something*. (I couldn't stand a man who had been brought up in a small town, and had always stuck there.) He *must* have a past. However, above all things, he must be unmistakably, inexorably, and immutably a gentleman, I mean to the extent if he were found drunk in a red shirt at seven o'clock in the morning in the middle of Third Avenue and Fourteenth Street, he would be as bewitching, as refined, as graceful, as attractive, as unquestionably superior as ever.

"Postscript. Besides these requisites and suggestions, he must naturally have money. The idea of a threadbare young couple in a garret with one tea-cup between them may have romantic possibilities, but it doesn't impress me as the ideal form of connubial felicity."

"I don't want much, do I?" she laughed, as she tossed the book back into the drawer.

With a certain pleasurable apprehensiveness Patricia recalled that she had promised to meet her worshiper again this very afternoon. After all she might as well pluck a little amusement against the general boredom. Besides she had never encountered such a will as his. It was like flint—good-natured flint! Undintable! Very

well! He would find out how far he could get with this masculine determination. She had a will of her own.

So they met, as arranged, near Observation Rock, and almost at once her barbarian asserted himself bafflingly, as before.

"Better sit down on this boulder—no, here!" he decided against her preference. "Oh, yes, you do like this side of the road. Look at that view!"

And Patricia sat on *his* side of the road, sat there and listened with genuine interest to his talk—about himself, his work, his purposes. She felt that this man had courage, real courage, not a melodramatic parody of it. And yet he wasn't a cave man either. Just when she was labeling him one he showed superb open-mindedness to her ideas, a lamb-like gentleness, a disconcerting modesty.

That night she wrote in her diary: "I have heard of a man being so homely that he is handsome. On second thought no one could call Stanley Matthews homely, no discerning person. He is too arresting. Too fascinating.

"Why am I thrilled by his stories, I who was always irritated by the doting Desdemona and her valourous Moor? Perhaps because Stan is never conceited. He courts the abstract in an admirable way. The inner man dominates his outer

manifestations. That sounds like the catechism, but—never mind!”

And the next day she wrote this confession: “He kissed me! He dared! Only the second day! I didn’t like it. He bent my head back until it hurt my neck. I resisted: ‘No, please, don’t—Oh! . . .’ I mumbled against his cheek. I made my body taut, bracing myself against his power. I did not want to kiss him. But . . . to my shame I write it . . . my lips betrayed me . . .”

The third day of Stanley Matthews came, and Patsy decided that she must put an end to him and his hopes; but somehow she did not. It was evident that he would be an impossible husband . . . except that she could wave good-bye to poverty. New York with Stan’s money would be a lark; but what could she do with *him*? No, she couldn’t think of it. *But she did!*

Thus the days passed until the sixth after their encounter on the trail.

“If you’re the star of this movie bunch up here, why are you playing around with me? Don’t you ever work?” she asked him.

“Work!” exclaimed the great fellow, stretched out full length on a huge boulder under some sycamores, “you can bet your jolly boots I work. I’m doing the hardest stunt right now I ever tried

to pull off. I'm going to marry you. The whole grouching bunch can wait and lose money until I get you."

Patsy gasped, ignoring his eyes, for he had drawn himself into a sitting posture and tried to claim her gaze.

"And you *dared* hold up the whole company for that!"

"I did," he said serenely.

"At a loss . . . ?"

"About a thousand a day."

"It's disgraceful. You know as well as I that you are wasting your time and their money. I'll never marry you. You're an absurd person!"

"Perhaps," he smiled, and her heart missed a beat.

"Stan Matthews, don't keep on with this silly bravado. It's compelling, I admit; you're gorgeously reckless and adventurous, but I'm adventurous, too. I'm reaching out—to other things. You're not the kind of man I plan to marry, not at all."

"Shall we go home?" he asked complacently. "I suppose it's not quite time for your parents to know about me; it's no use to worry them—yet."

Patricia made more promises to herself that she would not see Stan again, but she did not mean to keep them and knew that she did not. The

seventh evening found her swinging down the trail at his side, as usual. As they moved along he hummed:

"There's a long, long trail a-winding,
Into the land of my dreams."

"You might get a more up-to-date song," she twitted him.

Ignoring this, he said seriously: "To-morrow night we'll go down that trail *for keeps*, sweetheart."

She opened her lips to protest, but he closed them with a kiss. She put out her arms and pushed herself away from him. "No!" she protested weakly. "No!" and she went back to his arms.

"Now tell me this," he whispered. "Say it after me, just to please me, dear girl. I want to hear you say it. Say, 'I'm going to marry you,'" he ordered.

Thrilled in spite of herself she obeyed. "I—I'm going to marry you."

"'To-morrow night'—say it."

"To-morrow night."

"'Darling'—say it."

"D-darling!" she stammered.

Then he kissed her again . . .

CHAPTER VII

PATRICIA ELOPES

"Home is not always where we are born—it is among ideas that are dear to us."

THEN came the next day . . .

It was after dinner, in the fading twilight. The Lydig family were seated on the piazza of the Inn, apparently reading, really busy with their thoughts. Newton Lydig, full of tenderness for his daughter, a tenderness that was belied by his rather severe intellectual appearance, was wondering what the outcome of his quarrel with Patricia would be. Patsy had changed during the last week. She had ceased storming. She hadn't said a word about hating these mountains—suspicious circumstance! Nor had she even mentioned New York. On the contrary she had been gentle and conciliatory; none of which had in the least deceived her father. This only meant that she had come to some new decision. She was planning something—but what?

The novelist turned to his wife, who was near him, and said in a low tone: "She isn't reconciled, is she?"

"I'm afraid not," sighed the mother.

"She's rebellious—in her heart?"

Helen Lydig smiled mysteriously, then with that light of faith in her eyes that always comforted her and reproached her husband's impatience: "We mustn't worry about this, dear. It will work itself out all right. You know there are *two* Patricias."

"Two Patricias!" he reflected. "I suppose so. Well, that puts a big responsibility on the other one!"

He turned to his newspaper and tried to absorb himself in the financial report of the *New York Times*, but did not see the figures. His heart was yearning toward his child. If he could only protect her against herself through this period of immaturity, guarding her without seeming to, without stirring her ever-ready resentment. But his opinions carried so little weight with her. All sorts of people deferred to him, asked his advice about this or that (as happens with writers) and apparently valued it; but not Patricia. On the contrary, his opinions drove her rather in the opposite direction. How strange this sense of mutual antagonism be-

tween a father and daughter who really love each other!

And Patricia, as she skimmed her book, was thinking in a tumult of Stan and the promise she had made. There before her eyes was their appointment, scribbled on a slip of paper in his decided handwriting—she was to meet him down the trail at eleven. She glanced at her wrist-watch—a quarter past eight! In less than three hours this incredible thing would have happened!

Stanley had wished to tell her parents of their engagement, but Patricia had assured him that if he really wanted her, he had better take her on the wing—he would not have the ghost of a chance with her father. The thought of Newton Lydig father-in-lawing a movie star was too much for Pat's gravity, more than she had dreamed of in her most deliriously daring moments.

Just then the wind, erratic imp, whisked away her lover's penciled message and fluttered it, enticingly, under her father's very eye. Pat waited breathless while he stooped, picked up the slip, adjusted his black-rimmed *pince-nez*, frowned, then glanced at his daughter.

"That's mine, I guess, Father," the girl re-

marked casually, flipping over a page with well-assumed nonchalance.

"Oh," he said, then turned the note over again and handed it back ceremoniously without comment!

Patricia sighed in relief. It had been a close call. What if her father had read that note! But of course he hadn't. If he had he would have said something. A little later she escaped to her room and began her packing, pondering the momentous question whether to put in a pink or a blue negligée. She preferred the blue, but pink made her look softer, more appealing, and it might be well to play up the traditional quality of the bride.

Suddenly there was a sharp rap at the door and a summons from her father to come down at once. Her father knew! He had only waited so that he might collect himself for a difficult and painful scene.

Patricia came, carrying her hand-bag, and made no attempt at denial or evasion. She answered her father quietly, looking at him out of steady gray eyes, and admitted that it was true—she was going away—this very night—with a man she was going to marry. She said all this with that cultured self-control that always exasperated her father.

In the interview that followed Lydig begged his daughter to wait for a few days before taking this irrevocable step. Let her at least give them time to meet her prospective husband and know something about him; and to understand why she had chosen him so suddenly, why she had thought it best not to present him to her father and mother.

But the girl only insisted that this would do no good. Her father would not consent, and—she had made up her mind.

“What is his name, Patricia?” asked the mother.

“His name is Matthews, Stanley Matthews.”

“How long have you known him?”

“About two weeks.”

“You met him here in California? You didn’t know him in New York?”

“No.”

“What is his business—his occupation?” questioned Lydig.

Patricia’s chin lifted a little as she faced her father, half pleadingly; then she made as if to speak, but he cut her short.

“After all, what difference does it make? You’re bound to marry him—now?”

She hesitated, realizing that this was her final word, and tried to be conciliatory.

"Would you like to meet him, Father, if I send for him?"

"You simply wish to present him to us, Pat? You do not admit any discussion of the main question?"

"I—I'm going to marry him, Father."

Lydig looked at his wife and realized that she was at the limit of her strength. Then he made some strong remarks about ingratitude. In thinking it over afterward the father felt that perhaps he lost an opportunity here to change his child by gentleness; but he could do no more. He too had reached his limit.

So the break came at once.

Patricia went on to say (keeping her voice astonishingly low) that she did not mean to be unloving or undutiful, but she had thought this over and had decided—had given her promise—for good and sufficient reasons—

"What reasons?" Lydig demanded harshly. "I'd like to know what reasons seem good and sufficient to you for treating your mother and me as if—as if we were—nothing to you!"

The mother was crying softly as Patsy went to her. "Please don't cry, Mother. It doesn't do any good." Then she turned away, after kissing her mother, who clung to her, weeping, and started down the trail.

A moment later she was gone.

II

Such a night! The yawning cañons below were swimming with mist and moonlight. The mountains towered above, majestic, appalling in their strength. The pungent sweetness of sage and pine, the disturbing scent of the sun-saturated earth, claimed her senses.

From some unknown corner of her brain fear leaped. What had she done? Who was this man to whom she was going? A product of this great, bizarre West, so fierce, undisciplined, and lacking in *nuances*. Stan's great shoulders were a little like these rugged mountains. And his mind—she had explored it so little. Might it not enchant and enslave like this terrifying splendor of the night? She shivered and her thoughts went rushing back to that safe, if tedious, past that she was putting away from her forever.

A sharp end in the trail, a dark figure looming portentously, a sudden sickening leap of her heart—then she was caught close in Stan's hungry embrace; the salt of her sudden rush of tears mingled with his kisses.

III

For anguished hours through that night the father sat by his window looking out at the purple mountains, the drenching moonlight, at snow-covered Baldy, there in the distance, rising silver white above the range . . . thinking! Then, as an outlet for pent-up feelings that called for some expression, he wrote in his diary:

“She has gone! . . .

“Patricia! Our only child, so tenderly loved, upon whom so many hopes were centered . . . gone! Was it for this that we brought her up, heaped advantages upon her, were patient with her, proud of her—for this, that she might turn from us in a moment, and, without a word of warning, leave us for a stranger who signed himself ‘Stan’ and said he would be waiting for her down the trail at eleven?

“God! What’s the use of loving a child?”

“A foolish little memory . . . that day in Paris when George B—— persuaded me to cut off my mustache. Patsy met me at the door when I came home (she was only eight) and drew back, startled at my altered countenance.

“‘What’s the matter, Dinkels?’ I smiled awk-

wardly. 'Don't you know Father? Aren't you going to kiss Father?'

"The child hesitated, her lip quivered, her eyes filled slowly with tears.

"'You know, Father, I—I shall always love you just as much,' she stammered in sweet distress, 'no matter how—how *homely* you are!'"

"Ah, Patricia, my child! You have held my heart in the hollow of your hand from the moment I heard your first cry. All your willfulness, your egotism, all our disagreements, have not altered this deep and tender love for you that still abides. No action of yours can destroy my faith in the fundamentally fine woman you are and are to be. Life will point the way, as I could not."

CHAPTER VIII

PATRICIA CUTS OFF HER HAIR

WE left our lovers on the mountain height, drinking in with rapturous silence the beauty of the valley far below with its millions of winking lights. Great drifts of white mist floated like lost spirits in the cañons. California ceased to be California. It was just their world to explore.

An hour later they were married in a little vine-covered rectory at Pasadena whither they were whisked in Stanley's car; and Patricia discovered to her surprise that her real name was, not Mrs. Stanley Matthews, but Mrs. Arthur Stanley Creighton, Matthews being a name assumed for movie purposes.

"Wasn't that poor old divine a scream?" the girl whispered, when they were back in the car. "You ought to get him to go into the movies, dear. I've never seen such a rectory-rector off the screen. One would have thought he was consigning us to perdition, judging by his studied melancholy."

Her newly-made husband smiled, but he said: "Don't, Patsy—please."

Surreptitiously she shot a quick glance at him and saw that his face was quivering. She had a half-suspicion that his eyes were misty, and moved toward him. The queerest thing—a lump came into her throat! She wanted to cry. She clung to him.

"You lovely thing," he kept saying, his lips close to her cheek. "Oh! you dear, dear girl!—*my wife!*"

.
Ten days in a lovers' retreat in the Arroyo, ten wonderful, breathless days that made life seem to Patricia like a shining river stretching away before her eager eyes, glinting and beckoning in the sunshine, promising ineffable happiness, beyond, just beyond.

"Not a cloud on the horizon," she wrote in her diary on the third day. "The sails of my adventurous craft are set for that enchanting wind of good fortune which has brought me—my husband, Stan."

On the next day she wrote: "I always knew that if father would stop inhibiting my actions, everything would clear up. It has marvelously. There is a surprise at every bend, until I am in danger of becoming that ob-

noxiously old-fashioned thing—an enthusiast.”

And again she wrote: “I’ve been haunted by an idea that father and mother could never have experienced—could never have been—like Stan and me! If they were, how can our elders train themselves into such cast-iron miracles of repression? What is the matter with their memories—with their sympathies for young people?”

And again: “I know why our elders storm at us, ‘the unregenerate new generation’; they are *peeved* that they have jogged alone past the milestone where they can plunge in, too, and enjoy us and our joys! If father were only a modern edition of the young man he once was, he would hail a girl like myself with enthusiasm. It is so silly of him to try to pull the wool over my eyes by his model conduct of to-day. Can’t I read the eloquent French dots . . . in his books and see a few pictures of his youth myself? And I’m as glad that he owned those delicious dots . . . as I am sorry he disowns them! He would have been so much more fun if he would have taken me for an equal and comrade; chatted over some of his reminiscences with me in friendly fashion, instead of sitting aloft in Great High Mogul loneliness, demanding my respect.

“Why is a daughter supposed to be a little

carved ivory image of the Madonna? Why not let her be what is *bound* to be, a flesh and blood woman—like other women? It is all so utterly inconsistent.”

Patricia's first step into liberty was to have her hair cut off. Never would she forget the sensation of those cold shears on her neck, the way her head bobbed forward, the heavy dropping of her hair. Little shivers ran down her spine. The deed was done!

The barber uttered an exclamation; two white-aproned women in the beauty parlor turned to look with little ahs and ohs of regret. And Patsy overheard whispers:

“Such gorgeous hair!”

“What a pity!”

“A shame!”

“What a silly little fool!”

At first she sat calm and unmoved. How light and conquering her head felt! She picked up a hand mirror and studied herself in the big glass before her. The reflection smiled back, eyes alight with excitement. She ran her hands through the thick shock. It curled up delightfully off her neck and brought out the fine contours of her head, just as she had felt sure it would.

In the midst of this exultation Patricia thought of her father. Her hair had always been his pride. She wore it flying because he wished it until she was nearly sixteen. And now—regret gnawed at her heart; but regrets in the face of facts are useless. Besides, it was more modern to have short hair, more stylish, sanitary, and infinitely less trouble. She told them to wrap it up, and after a delicious orgy of shopping she sallied home with her hair in a neat little package under her arm.

Patricia had just taken off her hat and turned from the dresser when she heard a shout from Stan:

“Great God!”

He stood in the doorway, expressions flitting across his face at a terrific tempo. She recognized a masculine something oddly familiar that charged the whole room. She waited. Then the air cleared as unexpectedly as an April sky. Stan came over and kissed her.

“Where is it?” he asked quietly. “Oh, my dear, I *wish* you hadn’t! I wish you hadn’t had to!”

Pat fought her feelings, tossed her head and ran her fingers carelessly through the “bone of contention.”

“Here,” she said, and showed the box to her

disapproving husband, then she melted into tears.

"Oh! Stan," she wailed. "I'm sorry. Father loved it so, and now—you!" Her voice trailed off forlornly and ended in half-uttered gurgles under his kisses.

Like a wise man he let her cry for a bit, then drew from her comfortingly the confession of a deeper worry than appeared. This had been troubling Patsy ever since their plunge down the trail together, although she had hardly admitted it to herself until now. *Perhaps her father did not love her!* She recalled something her mother had told her one day when she was about fifteen, that, although parents go on loving their children with that first instinctive love they bestow upon them in babyhood, there comes a time, when children are beginning to be individuals when, if they want the *friendship* of their parents, they must earn it! Earn it! She hadn't earned it, and perhaps her father had ceased to love her!

Stan laughed at this, reasoned, and urged the disconsolate bride to write to her father; but that she refused to do. He was older and he ought to reach out to her first.

"I'll compromise by writing to mother, but I do wish . . . how I *wish* . . ." she sobbed.

“Anyway *you* love me just as well without my hair—don’t you?”

“I could not love you less, or better, darling. You own every fiber of my heart now—and always,” he assured her.

CHAPTER IX

THEIR FIRST QUARREL

AT the end of a blissful fortnight the young lovers moved over to Catalina Island for the production of "The Magic Isle," a serial in many episodes, with Stanley Matthews as the hero, and day after day Patricia watched the Company's yacht *Sinbad* lift anchor from a point in front of the hotel and sweep out of the blue bay of Avalon, with sun-lit, exultant sails. There were pictures of bandits and Indians to be taken on the other side of the island, and sometimes the bride accompanied this strange aggregation of movie-folk, daubed up like futuristic nightmares, and watched them go through their lurid adventures. But they soon got on her nerves. She found them disappointing under the pitiless revelations of a California sun. How utterly different Stanley was from the average professional! This puzzled her, and Stan was evasive on the subject, only remarking that later he had a surprise for

her. A surprise . . . now what could this be? Was he, too, thinking of New York?

These should have been radiantly happy weeks for the bride, since Stan was a lover that any girl might be proud of; she recognized his generous devotion and enjoyed the good times they had together—picnicking on the rocks, fishing in some remote cove, riding over the hills. What a picture Stan made, bronzed and competent, lifting and lowering the glistening oars, pausing to light his beloved briar pipe. How his laugh rang out over the waters!

“And yet I am restless, dissatisfied,” she confessed to her diary, “reaching out to life as I want it to be, not as it is. Surely this is not love. It is not the love I have dreamed of; if I really loved Stan I would be content to stay here with him indefinitely. By that test I certainly do not love him, for if I were chained to this island, I should hate its sparkling beauty!”

Patricia was resolved in her own mind that Stan should not sign up for another Western engagement, but must arrange for a transfer to the East as soon as “The Magic Isle” was finished. He could accomplish this, if he wished, and she had assumed that she could easily influence him to this decision; but latterly she had discovered a certain quiet relentlessness about her husband

that was beginning to disturb her. "Stan seems to be yielding to me," she wrote, "but later I find that only *apparently* did I have my wish; at bed rock his own will has been asserted. He reminds me of father's exasperating quotation: *Dulciter in modo, fortiter in re!*"

So she temporized, carefully planning the grand *coup* that was to lead them back to New York—and the heart of things.

At last, however, she decided to speak, and one night in early June got into her most charming gown, and waited for Stan in the rose-covered arbor near the water.

The faint blue twilight gathered in the little cove, bringing the hush and wistfulness of the hour. The monotonous wash of the pebbles on the rocky shore, the insistent song of the frogs and crickets, the faint, ghostlike sails on the distant horizon—all fitted in with her mood. But Stan came home tired, dirty and wet, after a day's adventuring with diving stunts and a wreck, and she saw that this was not her moment. These movie exploits looked easy enough from a comfortable seat in the theater, but they were strenuous and exhausting, and often she had seen the poor boy drag himself into the hotel wearier than any day laborer and fall asleep before dinner, like a worn-out child.

It was Stanley himself who anticipated her the next morning by abruptly unfolding his surprise. They had climbed high above the village by the little winding path cut in the hillside, and paused to look down over the bay that glittered and danced in the delicious sunshine. Suddenly, with the musical whirr of many wings, a flock of bluebirds darted past, sweeping, with lovely dippings and risings, into the cañon back of the hotel.

"Look!" cried Pat, as the sun glinted on their wings.

"The hills are full of them," Stan observed contentedly. "If they stand for happiness, we'll have an ocean of it." Then with eyes lighting up clear and sharp, he said: "No more 'movies' for me, sweetheart, I'm through. I'm going back to my own work. I've had three years of serials. I've earned a lot, learned a lot, and I quit with joy, all debts canceled."

Patricia waited, her brain whirling while he ran on, gripping her arm in his enthusiasm until it hurt. "We're going to Montecito, just out of Santa Barbara—up among the mountains. I have a bungalow with an enchanting garden and a view of the sea. There I can write in peace."

She stared at him, as if she had never seen this man before. His well-cut brown gabardine suit with its patch pockets, and his soft brown linen

shirt made him look unusually youthful. Everything about him spoke of life, almost brutally compelling. There was vigor to his hair, sunburned from days in the open, vigor in his deeply-browed skin, in his powerful movements. She drew away from him and straightened up, pressing her lips together.

"You're going to write—what?"

"Essays, novels, serious articles—all the things I've yearned to do for years and couldn't because of obligations. You see," his face grew sober and incredibly tender, "my father was no kind of a business-man. When he died he left his affairs in a mess. There was a big bunch of notes unpaid and—it was up to me to straighten 'em out, see?"

"I—I see," Patsy stammered.

"The movie road was the only way I could travel that led to money—big money—so I took that road. But I'm caught up now, to-day I'm a free man, with enough to carry us along—simply." He stretched his arms wide, threw out his chest and took a long breath. Then he dug into one deep pocket and brought out the inevitable pipe. She watched his strong, intelligent fingers fill the bowl. He lighted the pungent tobacco and drew contentedly upon the amber stem.



Patricia trying to make up her mind to say she is sorry

"This is your *surprise?*" Her voice was flat, dun-colored.

"Why, yes! I thought you hated my being a 'movie-star,' not that you said it, darling, but I thought . . ."

The tide of bitterness rose higher as she saw the dream-world she had built up day by day vanishing like smoke. She felt ready to strike, to break, to hurt intolerably.

"And just what is *my* rôle to be?" she interrupted in a hard, unnatural voice.

He turned and regarded his young wife incredulously, then burst into a good-natured laugh that kindled her to fury. She struck out to free herself from his confident arms. To her terror, the odor of his breath and the smoke-sweet fragrance of his coat caught at her senses. A faint shiver that numbs the will ran over her.

"But—I—I," she faltered, "I thought you'd take me back to New York. I hoped you'd get an Eastern transfer. That's one reason why—er—"

"What?" he demanded, his eyes insistent.

"That's one reason I married you," she blurted out defiantly.

"I guess you'll have to make the best of it—now."

"Not necessarily," she snapped. "Come—let's go back to the hotel."

II

That night Patricia wrote in her diary: "I swam in the sea this afternoon, thinking this might calm me, swam on my back, and watched the faintly pink clouds drifting in the sky, the gulls circling low. But there was no calm. I cannot see things Stan's way."

And the next night she wrote: "In spite of my restlessness there is an insidious charm about this island that wins one gradually, like certain subtle and costly perfumes. Little by little I yield myself to its beauty, to its blue waters, swirling against the jagged black rocks of the shore line. I heard a story, or did I dream it? that this is a place of enchantment where one discovers *one's real self*, which, alas! one seldom has even a bowing acquaintance with. This true self comes out from the heart of these rose-colored hills, comes and dwells with one."

PATRICIA

(*Looking up from her writing*) Hello! Woozy! I suppose you think *you're* my real self.

Well, you're not. You're a cheeky little sneak.

WOOZY

Never mind that. I want to know what you're going to do with this nice man you've married.

PATRICIA

Ah! You approve of him?

WOOZY

He's much too good for you. Why don't you stop this foolish intriguing to get back to New York and settle down to real happiness?

PATRICIA

I can't be happy away from New York.

WOOZY

Silly! You've got a splendid, red-blooded husband who worships you. He'll give you everything you want.

PATRICIA

(*Vexed*) He can't, if he leaves the movies. Do you think I'm going to be a meek little housewife? (*Dreamily*) Perhaps if I loved him in the ideal way—

WOOZY

Patsy! How can you say such a thing?

PATRICIA

A woman doesn't necessarily love a man in the ideal way just because she's married to him.

WOOZY

You *do* love him.

PATRICIA

(*Judicial tone*) Perhaps. But mark this, Woozy, if trouble comes, it won't be my fault. It will be the fault of these two men with their dominating ideas.

WOOZY

Two men?

PATRICIA

Yes, father and Stan. They swept me off my feet. You know they did. Why should men always be asserting their wills over women? You *must* do this! You *mustn't* do that! I *will* kiss you! I *will* marry you! How is a girl going to know when she really loves?

WOOZY

But you *do* love him, Pat. You can't help loving him. He's wonderful. And you'll love him more and more, if you'll only stop analyzing everything and—writing in that conceited journal. (*Pleading*) Go to Stan and tell him you understand why he wants to quit the movies.

PATRICIA

I don't. I think it's very unfair of him. He's making two thousand dollars a week. Think what that means.

WOOZY

You ought to be proud that he aspires to some-

thing better than bloodthirsty serials. They're not worthy of his talents.

PATRICIA

Well, I'm not proud of him, and if he tries to put this over on me, he'll be sorry. Now shut up!

WOOZY

No. There's something else. Why don't you write to mother and father?

PATRICIA

Don't bother me. I'm going to write to them—when I'm not so worried.

WOOZY

You mean when you're not so selfish.

III

Patricia, like most girls of her age and bringing up, was selfish. It is hard to place the responsibility for this condition, whether upon parents for spoiling their daughters by ill-judged indulgence, or upon society for practically compelling the parents to act thus (through force of example), or upon the growing spirit of irreligion that has hardened and disillusioned the younger generation. When Patricia married Stanley she thought she was solving all her difficulties. She thought

that all harassing and belittling money worries were over, and that life henceforth would become free and gracious. Alas! Now she was discovering that she had only stumbled into new worries and different harassments. In some ways Stanley Matthews, for all his devotion, was less malleable than her father, as on this important evening when he enraged her by saying: "Your father treated you like a child, Pat, and you acted like one. He humored you, yielded to you when he ought to have spanked you. But to me you're a responsible grown person, and I expect you to act like one."

"And help you economize, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"And do some of the housework?"

"Why not?"

They quarreled then—fiercely, separating for the night without a word of reconciliation. Stan took his things into an adjoining room, slamming the door, and a few minutes later Pat heard him booming out a song that rose above the noisy rush of his shower.

"And there's not a girl like Sa-a-lly," he proclaimed over and over again. If she hadn't felt sure it was childish bravado on his part, this would have been insufferable.

Her heart felt sore and beaten, her head ached.

She went round and round in mental circles. What was she to do? A sudden vision of home came to her. If only she could go home! She felt her cheeks flame. Of course she could not go home.

With a wry smile Patsy recalled her father's story of her four-year-old days. He had found her on the top steps that led down into the kitchen, playing with some dishes that the cook had given her to keep her quiet. She had ranged them neatly along the top step.

"So you have some dishes?" he said, by way of conversation.

"They're not mine," she answered gravely, "they're God's dishes." Then, before the poor father had recovered, she informed him: "I am God. This is Heaven. Now," she drew herself up with an air of conquest and came slowly down the steps as if she were trailing long robes, "now, God is coming down out of Heaven."

That was the trouble with her. All her life she had been playing God. And now Life had the laugh on her. It had checkmated her.

Patricia bathed her eyes, looked at herself in the mirror and decided that part of her failure to manage Stanley was due to the fact that her short hair did not go well with this negligée. How many, many times she had wished her hair back

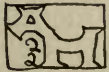
on again! No action of her life had ever convinced her so completely of the folly of obeying an impulse without a long-distance view of the future. Her father was right!

She curled up in the window-seat, hugging her knees, gazed morosely out over the star-lit sea, lit a cigarette and thought.

Was she really an unintelligent little beast? Her blazing honesty was destructive. It was crude, untutored. If she had only used tact, tripped along lightly in their talk, she might have met Stan's objections and brought him to terms. It was her miserable pride. In her heart she was sorry for the nasty, sharp things she had said, but . . .

No one who has not a stubborn, willful nature can know the throes of agony a less favored person will suffer before expressing regret for a wrong or an unkind action. Patsy remembered once when she was a child being particularly hateful to her mother, who did not scold or punish her, but only turned reproachful eyes upon her as she tucked her into bed, and said: "I'm very much disappointed in you, Patricia. I would never have believed that you could be so naughty."

What a wave of remorse had swept over her! Her heart had swelled to enormous proportions.



“Now, God is coming down out of Heaven”

It seemed to fill her whole body. She wanted to burst into sobs of penitence; but, instead, she only pulled the bed clothes sulkily over her head as her mother turned away with a sigh and closed the door. The rest of the night, up to twelve o'clock, the child had spent in the long hall that separated her bedroom from her mother's. She would get out of her bed, repentant, and patter down the passageway only to hesitate outside the door, standing first on one cold bare foot, then on the other. Finally, after a dozen such fruitless trips, the door opened and her mother came out, whereupon the child leaped into her arms. "I—I'm sorry, but I—I can't say it!" she sobbed.

Patricia got up abruptly, stumbled over one of her husband's great mountain boots and tip-toed to the door that separated their two rooms. This was the first night Stan had been away from her. Her imagination flew in to him. She put her ear to the keyhole. Not a sound! Probably he was as wretched as she was, as sorry, he certainly had said horrid, domineering things . . .

Her curiosity got the better of her, and, by the merest crack, she opened the door. No sound! She opened it wide. The little rose-shaded light by his bed was still burning; and now, deep and regular, she caught his breathing.

She walked into the center of the room and—there, stretched diagonally across the big bed, lay Stan—sound asleep!

Patsy hovered between wrath and an uncontrollable desire to laugh. How like a man! Money matters could keep him tossing all night, but a quarrel with his wife, his safely married wife . . .

Rage tore loose in her again. She stormed back to her room, undressed, turned off the lights, and went to bed. Not to sleep, however, for she was in a dilemma. If Stan insisted upon going into retirement on a bread and butter basis and she went with him, how delighted her father would be. Nothing that he could have devised could so exactly have suited his idea. The quiet, the discipline, the work, both manual and mental. Admirable! It would be the making of Patricia.

On the other hand, if she were to break with Stan (How could she anyway? She hadn't a cent of her own) she would again prove that her father was right. A poor husband indeed she must have selected to leave him so soon. Her cheeks burned. Her pride was abashed. What could she do?

Thus Patricia tossed feverishly, perplexed and humiliated. Why should men always rule and dominate women? And decide that women must

know how to do domestic work, or show an interest in it? Every man has some such old-fashioned ideal of a womanly woman hidden away in a corner of his brain—willed to him through generations. Womanly! How that word irritated her!

Patsy reverted to the conclusion that all her troubles had come from being too honest. Honesty is a good principle for a man, but for a woman. Never! Not if she wanted to get along with the opposite sex. (And she can't get along without them!) Men like to be lied to coyly and adroitly. It makes them feel that they are playing a clever game, it flatters their vanity. *Men lap up vanity as a kitten does milk!*

Meanwhile Stan was breathing serenely in the adjoining room, and would waken fresh and dangerously alert in the morning. She must decide on something or be placed at a hopeless disadvantage. There was evidently only one thing to do—make peace with Stan, apparently yield to his wishes, and then, later on, bend all her energies toward changing him.

Having decided this the young wife got up, groped her way to the door and a moment later was back at Stan's bedside. His face was burrowed comically into the pillow, only one eye being visible, and his arms were thrown up and

rounded about it. He looked like such a youngster!

Pat leaned over and ran her finger along the light down on her husband's one visible ear. He stirred. How splendid and strong-looking he was! . . . But he *might* keep on a little longer in the movies. She wanted at least *one* grand splurge into the gay life. This was such an anti-climax . . .

She looked down at him, then impulsively stooped to kiss him. Her hair swept his forehead and he brushed it away impatiently. It was too funny and she burst out laughing whereupon he opened that single eye and blinked solemnly at her.

"Hello!" he groped drowsily, "that you, Pat?"

She hesitated only a second, then turned off the light, crept in with him . . . and went to sleep in his arms.

IV

That same night another scene . . .

At Durand's restaurant in Los Angeles (there is no better food to be had in Paris) where the father and mother had dined, and talked for the hundredth time about Patricia and renunciation—how the time inevitably comes when parents must

readjust themselves, often with anguish, to the severing of bonds of tenderness that have grown strong through years!

Never would the mother admit that Patsy had been unloving; on the contrary she defended the child for holding to her own viewpoint and standing out for her liberty, even against her parents. Her faith was unwavering that, through all this tangle of apparent waywardness and contrariness, Patricia had been true to herself and to her destiny.

"Then you think everything is coming out all right? You really think that?"

Helen's seriousness deepened, she was silent for a moment, her eyes shadowed by a grave thoughtfulness as if she were communing with her soul; then she said simply: "I believe in the inheritance we have given our child . . . I have faith in the prayers I've said . . . I *know* she has chosen a man worthy of her love."

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH STANLEY CALLS ON PATRICIA'S FATHER

A FEW days later while Newton Lydig was at work in the Pasadena home (he had taken Patricia's little apartment as his office and many of her books and pictures were still where she had left them) the telephone rang and the novelist was informed that a Mr. Creighton wished to see him. He could not place this person at first, but presently remembered a novel of unusual promise, *Brute and Angel* by Arthur S. Creighton, a young author who had sent his first book to Lydig a couple of years ago in New York in the hope that he would find in it something worthy of commendation, which the veteran writer did. It was Arthur S. Creighton who was calling now, and he was asked to come up.

As soon as Lydig caught sight of this young fellow he liked him. A face of rugged homeliness, but full of power and individuality. Trustworthy, but vaguely formidable—a man to drive ahead relentlessly after his own ambition and pur-

poses, yet kindly in the main. A fine physical specimen—tanned like a sailor, strong as a mountaineer. He had thick reddish hair.

“Well,” smiled the older man, “literary work doesn’t seem to have hurt you.”

Creighton answered with embarrassment and, as they talked, Lydig noticed in his caller a vague uneasiness as if he had something on his mind that he wanted to express, but could not. Several times his eyes lingered on Patricia’s picture there on the desk beside a vase of California poppies.

At a reference to his novel the young man said that Lydig’s words of praise had lifted him up to the clouds, had made him feel like poor Walt Whitman when he got that letter from Emerson.

“I hope the book sold well?”

“No, it didn’t,” the visitor shook back his hair with a characteristic gesture. “But never mind, I’ll get square later on. What troubles me is—er—”

Then awkwardly he came to the reason for his call which was in connection with some very lucrative work in the movies that he had been doing for the past two years. His problem was one that disturbs all writing men these days—the motion picture lure. The question was should he go on with this movie work in spite of its inartistic, not to say trashy character, and renew

an extraordinarily advantageous contract—two thousand dollars a week!—or should he go back to the serious writing that he aspired to do—and a modest income? Perhaps Lydig had a subconscious intuition that they were approaching a dramatic situation. At any rate he gave careful attention to the talk that followed.

“How old are you?” he asked.

“Twenty-seven.”

The questioner felt a pang of envy as he remembered what he was at twenty-seven—a talented, rather ill-regulated newspaper man in Paris, full of vague projects for the future—books to be written, plays to be written—*some day!* But in the main intensely or indolently occupied with day-by-day pleasures and excitements. Would he at twenty-seven have seriously considered giving up two thousand dollars a week or two hundred dollars a week (as a matter of fact he had never earned more than one hundred dollars a week in Paris!) for the sake of some fine piece of work that he hoped to accomplish? Alas, no!

Lydig got up and walked about the room.

“With all this money that you’ve been making, you must have saved something?” he remarked.

“I’ve saved forty thousand dollars. That’s the best I could do. I had debts to pay—my

father's debts—a matter of honor. That's why I took up movie work."

There was a look in his eyes that gave the older man a queer sense of responsibility. After all Arthur S. Creighton was nothing to him. Why should he take his problems to heart? But he did, and he listened with particular interest for the answer to another question that he shot forth (knowing its importance), a question that seemed to throw Creighton into confusion, for he colored and fidgeted as Lydig asked:

"Are you married?"

"Yes, I am. That's the point. If I weren't married I shouldn't hesitate a moment. I'd give up the movie game and write books; but . . ."

"You mean your wife wants luxuries—money?"

"Yes."

Of course the father thought of Patricia now, but by some strange obtuseness he never once connected her with his visitor.

"It will be quite a come-down for your wife, won't it?"

"Yes."

"It will mean simpler living?"

"Much simpler."

"Before I answer your question, I'll have to talk a little. Mr. Creighton," he proceeded, "I'm not exactly a fatalist, I admit the possibility

of a man's surpassing himself, as it were, especially a young man; but it's improbable. For the most part we humans strike a certain gait of accomplishment and keep to that gait. We *can't* do any better, no matter how much we would like to. Furthermore, the things we do best are usually the things we do easily. In your case you see yourself writing novels—big novels, don't you?"

"Well—yes."

"Of course you do. So does every newspaper man, every magazine writer. He imagines himself a Charles Dickens. He dreams of what he would do if he only dared to cut loose from the drudgery that is enslaving him. But the chances are he would write poor novels. Or poor plays. The chances are that newspaper work or magazine work is the most suitable field for his talents, as long as he only *dreams* of changing."

Creighton squinted his eyes in a puzzled frown. "You mean—" he began, but the other cut him short.

"Wait! We are all dreamers. I dream of writing better novels. Every year I promise myself not to let my work be handicapped any longer by mercenary considerations. I'll dig out the biggest thing in me and write that, regardless of popularity, or royalties or anything else. But I

don't do it. I keep on writing the same old *safe* stuff that has brought me in a good income for years. Most novelists are like that. In our hearts we think we could do better, *but we don't!* And it's doubtful if we could. If we could, we would, we'd be compelled to by the creative urge within us."

"You think I'd better stay in the pictures?"

"Unless you're sure you are an exception to the rule—yes. You may be an exception, there are exceptions, occasional exceptions—in every line. Graham Bell breaks away from school-teaching and invents the telephone. The Wright brothers kick over the traces of some hum-drum calling and show the world how to fly. Madame Curie discovers radium. Walt Whitman writes the 'Leaves of Grass.' It's possible but—are you sure? You've written one novel and it didn't set any rivers on fire, did it? Besides—" he hesitated, not wishing to hurt the young man's feelings.

"Go on. Please!"

"If you really had in you the making of a great novelist—there's no use adding to the crop of second-rate or third-rate novels, is there?—you'd have broken loose already. You wouldn't be here asking my advice. You would have decided your literary destiny for yourself. Nothing could

have kept you at motion picture serials, if you felt the power of a first-class novelist burning within you."

"You're wrong, sir," the young fellow answered quietly. "The necessity of paying a debt of honor could have kept me at it—until the debt was paid."

"Well, yes, I see that."

"And as to saying that the average man does the best work he's capable of doing, I don't believe it. The average man doesn't begin to do what he might do. Take our American writers. Do you mean to tell me they couldn't make a better showing? Of course they could. You admitted it just now when you spoke of your own aspirations. You might realize them—all you big fellows who have made reputations could realize them, if you didn't care so damned much about—" He checked himself at the beginning of a fiery outburst.

"About what?"

"Oh, about living in expensive apartments, and riding around in limousines and—I suppose you think me a cheeky young cub to criticize my elders and betters like this, but—"

"Go on! Let us have it."

"I feel sore about this, Mr. Lydig. It fills me with rage to think what a measly impression our

American novelists make in the world. Why must we always be kow-towing to English novelists? Why haven't we any writers over here as distinguished as Kipling or Barrie or H. G. Wells, or even that sickening mountebank, Bernard Shaw? It's no use pretending we have, for we haven't. Why not? I'll tell you why—you said it yourself, it's because we play safe all the time. We are crazy to be successful, to write best sellers, to pile up royalties—money."

"It's the spirit of the age."

"Well, it's a rotten spirit that has never made for art. I've been fed up on it in the movies. *Reclame!* A writer ought to be a consecrated person, living to express great ideas. If he can't be that he might as well go into the chewing-gum business. But what do we see? Look at our novelists! Our playwrights! Where do they get their inspiration? I'll tell you—from the press-agent, the box office. Watch 'em strutting about at banquets, tea-parties, women's clubs . . . shaking hands like politicians . . . full of poses . . . thinking about the speech they are going to make and hoping to God the newspapers will print it—which they usually don't. Excuse me, sir."

Lydig laughed.

"What would you have us do?"

"Do?" Creighton flashed back recklessly.

"I'd have a writer search into his heart or soul or wherever he keeps his treasure and spit it out without fussing so much about style. Style! Good Lord! A man's style will take care of itself, if he has anything to say that's worth saying. If he hasn't, he'd better not write. What's the use of being so damned clever and subtle when the stuff has no value? Did Lincoln try to be clever when he wrote the Gettysburg Address? Did he worry about his style? He did not, but he said something that will be remembered after all the books of all the word-magicians and beauty-worshippers have been forgotten."

"Don't you worship beauty?"

"For its own sake? No, sir! I worship beauty when it clothes great thoughts, stirs noble emotions . . . faith . . . courage; not a vague, sensuous beauty like an opium dream. I worship the beauty of Victor Hugo. I'd rather have written *Les Miserables* than anything in English literature . . ."

More and more, as Lydig listened, he felt himself stirred, captivated by the courage of this young barbarian.

"The trouble with American writers," Creighton swept on, "is that they're always imitating this man or that man, usually some infernal Englishman who succeeded because he imitated no-

body. We haven't the courage to be ourselves, but we might have it. Mark Twain had it. O. Henry had it. So did that corking old Walt Whitman. And Edgar Allan Poe. I say if an artist can't be himself, he can't be anything."

Patricia's father was kindling now in this blaze of enthusiasm. He forgot his own objections, he went back to the time when he had thrilled under the urge of these very same feelings and aspirations, to the time before he had surrendered to expediency and become a compromiser. He was suddenly ashamed of himself and of his mediocre work.

"I hope I didn't offend you," he apologized, "by saying that if you had the making of a novelist in you, you'd have left the movies of your own accord. That was rather a sweeping assertion and—"

"I *have* left the movies," Creighton interrupted sharply. "I began a novel several weeks ago. I expect to go ahead with it and finish it, unless . . ."

Lydig interrupted him: "Don't say any more. You're right, my boy. I agree with you. For God's sake don't commercialize yourself. Keep to your big ambition, even if it means sacrifice. Consecrate yourself, as you said just now, to the best that's in you and—"

"Wait!"

"What's the matter? What are you keeping back?"

"My—my wife."

"If your wife amounts to anything, she'll make the fight with you—she'll be glad to. I tell you art is based on sacrifice. She'll understand that, if she loves you . . . and if she doesn't, if she isn't fine enough to understand, then my advice to you is—"

Stanley cut the speaker short with a swift thrust of his hand.

"Stop!" he cried. "You don't understand, I—I've been trying to tell you, but—I couldn't. My wife is—she's your daughter—Patricia!"

CHAPTER XI

MAN TO MAN

ONE never knows in advance how one will react to a startling surprise—a sudden peril, a great joy. Once Lydig had been awakened in the night by a burglar and all he did was to sit up good naturedly and stare at the intruder, calling out "Hello!", which so astonished the fellow that he dived out through an open window and took to his heels. Now in the face of Creighton's revelation, the novelist simply said, "I see!"

Naturally he was inclined to blame Stanley for not declaring straight out who he was when he first came in, instead of dissimulating; but when the father saw how disturbed his young friend was, how regretful for the false position he had placed them both in, he had not the heart to press his advantage. Already they were on good terms and they remained so, Lydig's only expressed grievance against his son-in-law being the elopement. Why had he not come frankly to the parents and asked their consent?

"My only justification is that I loved her, and—was afraid of losing her," answered the young man with disarming penitence. "You see she was wavering, she wasn't sure that she loved me. She isn't yet."

The father's face clouded. "Is it possible you have taken the responsibility of settling my daughter's future without being sure she loves you?"

"Well, somebody had to do it—somebody in her own generation. Patricia is a wonderful girl, but she's like a thoroughbred colt that's been running wild and will hurt herself—kick everything to pieces—unless she's trained."

"Trained?"

"That's a rough word. I don't mean it that way. I mean that I can help her—against herself—better than anybody else, because I—" he bit his lips nervously, "I care so much. I'm ready to take any amount of trouble. I'll do whatever is necessary. I'm not going to lose her. That's why I've put this money thing up to you, sir. As far as my literary reputation goes, I don't give a hang, that's secondary to Patricia. She comes first. I'll stay in the movies all my life, if it's better for her. But I don't believe it is. I believe it's better for her to come down to earth, to face life, to bear part of the burden that's put

upon all of us. On the other hand I may be mistaken. If I am, I want you to tell me. That's why I'm here."

Again Lydig was tempted to become acrimonious when he reflected that his son-in-law had led him to commit himself in regard to the financial question before revealing his identity. That was not quite fair. On the other hand it was so evident that Stanley meant to do right—his honest countenance left no doubt on that point—that the father put a good face on the matter and, smiling, held out his hand.

"There, my boy! We all make mistakes. The main point is," he added with a searching look, "I feel that you are sincere, Creighton, I *know* you are."

"Thank you, sir."

They talked for an hour, man to man, and Stanley explained as well as he could Patsy's aloofness from her parents, admitting, without disloyalty to her, that she had a prideful spirit.

"She is angry because she is in the wrong," declared the father. "She knows she ought to have come to see her mother and me. By the way, does she know you have come?"

"No, sir."

"Ah!"

"I assure you it grieves her not to come, she

hates to be unkind, but she just can't—yet. Especially—” his face brightened with a mischievous gleam, “when she isn't quite sure whether this wonderful, soul-satisfying liberty thing, that she's been so crazy about, is going to materialize in the way she thought. I tell her liberty is an eternal illusion, something we all dream of, but never get.”

“That's true.”

“Pat is all the time afraid some one will put something over on her—it used to be you, now it's me. You've heard her talk, sir.”

“Yes,” dryly. “I thought marriage would change all that. I thought *love* would—”

“Love!” the young man repeated. “Pat's got to find out first what love really is.”

“Right, my boy. Love must be fed by unselfishness. I've seen that kind of love for twenty-three years.”

“You mean Patricia's mother?”

“Yes.”

“I know. Pat admits the beauty of her mother's life, she's often touched by it, but she figures that her mother *wants* to be unselfish, so why shouldn't she be? Whereas Pat wants to be selfish, even though it makes her unhappy. This younger generation has no use for duty.”

As Newton Lydig listened, he recovered his

equanimity, taking note of the fact that here was a case where the younger generation might find their own progressive medicine rather bitter. How would young Mr. John F. Carter, Jr., brilliant crusader against blundering oldsters of the Grundy tribe who have spoiled the world and had now better shut up and "Go into their respective backyards and dig for worms, great big pink ones—" how would he enjoy it, if he should find himself mated to one of these wild young heroines whom he champions so amusingly in the *Atlantic Monthly*?

They returned to the question of expenses and discussed the necessity that Patricia would be under of coming down to a more reasonable way of living, if Stanley decided to give up his large income. Pat would have to economize in various ways. She would have to get up in the morning at a reasonable hour. And so on.

"If you can make her get up in the morning," laughed her father, "you'll be doing more than we were ever able to do. And if you can persuade her to do housework—cooking, sewing, anything like that—well, I'll say the age of miracles isn't past."

Stanley fell into frowning silence, while Lydig went on to say that the only thing for a man to do in the face of a crisis is to decide deep down

within himself what is the right and best course for him to follow, and then to follow it. "You're at the parting of the ways, my boy. I naturally think of Patricia's advantage, but no good can come from spoiling her, coddling her. I've done enough of that already. You must start right. The first year of married life is the most important. You establish a precedent.

"As to the money part of it, money isn't everything. On the contrary, your children will be spoiled by too much money, and if you go on year after year, piling up a fortune at the expense of your best aspirations and possibilities, they will be the first to turn against you later on and say, 'Poor old dad, that was the best he could do!' which will wound you cruelly, for you will know that the fault was your own, that you failed to do the big thing in life you might have done because you lacked the courage to assert yourself as the head of your own family."

That settled it. Stanley turned to the older man with a light of high purpose in his eyes and said simply: "By George, sir, you're right. I'll do it. I'll take the risk. I'm going back to Montecito now and—well, I may run down again in a few weeks and let you know what happens."

CHAPTER XII

PATRICIA WORKS FOR A WIFELY HALO

A LULL for the lovers before the storm, a long, lazy lull in the bungalow at Montecito, most beautiful spot on earth, Stan declared; but Patricia called it *hatefully* beautiful.

A premonitory clash came one morning in August at the breakfast table—ancient center of domestic trouble—laid attractively in the garden under the tropical horse-chestnuts.

Patricia sat there waiting. Her eyes moved restlessly over the lawn where the jacaranda trees had shed their blossoms in exquisite lavender pools; then on along flower-bright paths to the garden, humming, astir, fragrant with summer's secrets.

"Tell your master I've been waiting fifteen minutes," she said fretfully to Louis Tong, their immaculate Chinese servant with his neatly braided blue-black hair wound about his head.

"Yes, Missey Cleighton," lisped the Oriental,

vouchsafing one of his rare, but irresistible smiles as he trotted away.

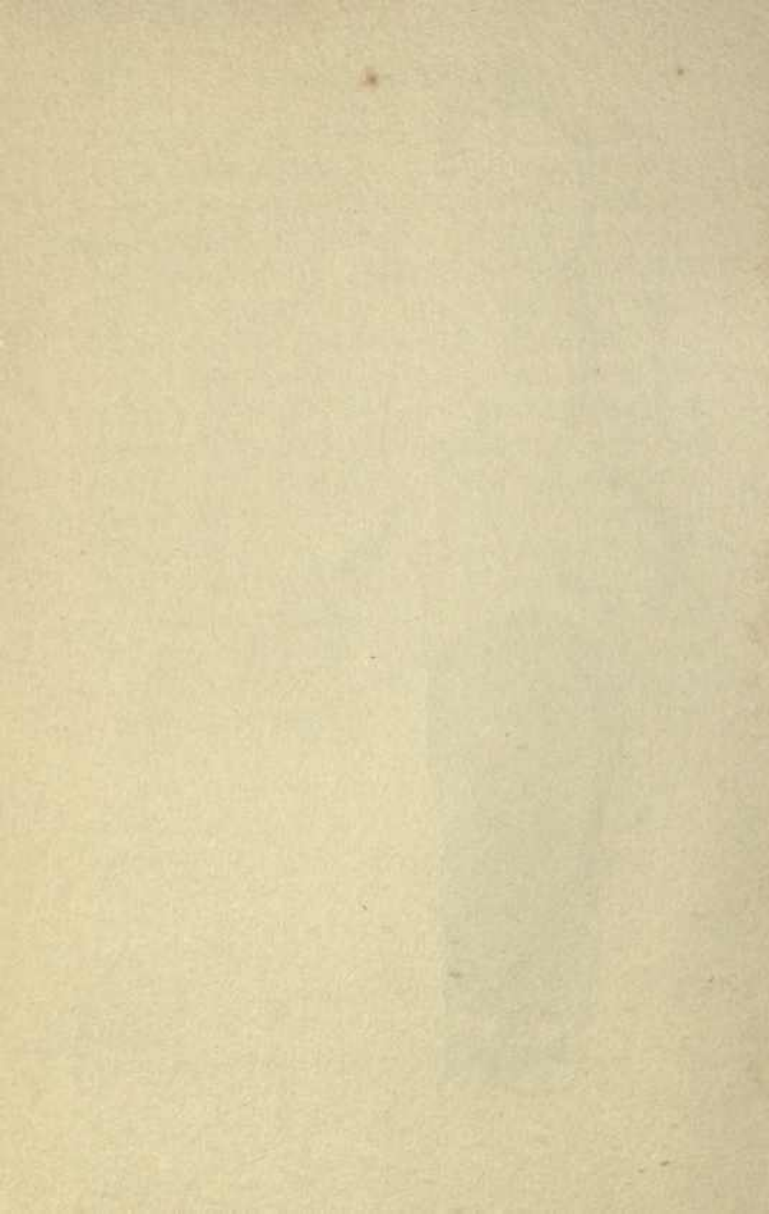
Patricia was irritated by the knowledge that Stanley had worked late the night before at his interminable novel. That novel! It seemed like divided allegiance; also it was a perpetual reminder of their impaired financial state.

She had another unexpressed grievance in a subtle change she had noticed or thought she noticed in Stan's attitude toward her ever since his visit to Los Angeles a fortnight before; in this change Patsy had sensed her father's influence. She could scarcely believe that Stan would have gone to see her father without telling her, but—where did he get these new fathery ideas? If he *had* gone, she would be furious. One master-of-her-fate was enough. To have two who chummed together and talked her over would be the last straw.

Stan appeared presently in working attire which, it must be confessed, was of a rough-and-ready albeit comfortable character—a gray shirt with rolled down collar open at the throat, an old pair of trousers and a most disreputable, flapping pair of red slippers covering socks that needed darning, at least one of them did. And his shock of red hair glistened redder than usual after his morning shower. All of which exasperated Pat,



Louis Tong



especially his serene indifference to the impression he was making, his masterful sloppiness, as she called it. Already Stan was thinking of his book, eager to get back to the day's task and take up the creative threads where he had left them the night before.

"Morning, dear," he nodded as he seated himself and made ready to eat, drumming meantime on the table with strong, freckled fingers and watching the cool, shifting shadows patterned by the foliage on the white damask.

It was a trifle now that started the battle of words, a disapproving glance and comment by Patricia regarding his appearance, more particularly those horrible red slippers and blue socks—with a hole in one of them!

"That's a little up to you, isn't it?" he smiled.

"Why is it?" she flared. "Why should I be responsible for your socks?"

"Somebody's got to look after things. Yesterday I hadn't a clean collar."

"Well, suppose I hadn't a clean blouse! Would you worry?"

He eyed her sharply, and met the implied challenge, saying good-naturedly:

"Look here, Pat. I say it's up to you to see that this house is better managed. You don't know what Louis Tong is doing in the kitchen—

what he buys or how much he spends! You should. You promised to be my partner, and if our exchequer has diminished—”

“That’s not my fault. If a housewife was what you wanted when you married me, you could have hired one.”

“Pat!”

“Over at Catalina I told you . . .”

“And I told you what I’d expect of you,” he interrupted. “I weakened because I—well, I hoped you’d grow to care for me. Besides, I hate these clashes. They soil love. I know how your father felt, I see why he couldn’t bring himself to force you to do things.”

She pricked up her ears. How did Stan know that her father could not force her to do things? Besides he had!

“Now I *insist* upon your doing your share,” her husband went on.

“Insist! You can’t get anything out of me through force, Stan Creighton. You may as well know it. I’ll bring my share to this partnership, but in a different way. I want to write . . . I want to write quite as much as you do.”

Stan laughed.

“You’ve never taken my writing or my art seriously,” she went on hotly. “Never, never!”

You seem to think that all women are meant for is to be nice little domestic tabbies. Well, some of us are not."

"I haven't seen you laboring at your writing, Pat. You've dabbled a bit, that's all. If you're in earnest why don't you work? Masterpieces aren't thrown off in a moment of careless rapture. Everything takes hard work. Now your art. . . . There you have a real gift."

Father again! Work! And her art! Her father had wanted her to commercialize this by making posters. Stan would be suggesting this next, she thought tearfully.

"I tell you I can't work here," she choked. "I've tried again and again. The white paper stares back at me, empty—empty as the days, empty as my mind of ideas. . . . Probably I'll never really work until I'm forced to, until I have to earn my bread and butter. I've felt all along that I should be on my own. I wanted to try it in New York and father put a dam to that ambition. It sent me off on a tangent. That's what dams do."

"I suppose I'm the tangent."

"If I've made a mistake, it's better to acknowledge it now and start over again, isn't it?"

Stan had grown grave.

"Mistake? Oh, Patsy," he pleaded, "can't you come down to earth, forget yourself for a while and help me?"

At which she flashed back angrily: "If you had told me we were to live the simple life when I married you, that would have been different. But you didn't! It wasn't fair, Stan. You've humiliated me."

II

The outcome of this talk was an absolute command from Creighton that his wife assume the housekeeping responsibility. A direct command! Patricia felt prisoned, bound to stay here, bound to act as he wished. She bottled her rage, but it fermented and grew more dangerous each day as she went about her imposed domestic duties. She hated housework with a deep and smoldering hatred, most unchristian and unwomanly. Why should a woman spend half her day planning the meals for her lord and master and the rest of the time superintending the house? Why must she always adjust her mood to her husband's mood, achieving harmony only by tactful management of him, that is by the sacrifice of her mental, spiritual and physical self? If marriage were really a partnership, why might not he adjust himself a little to her? Also, if a woman can earn money

by writing or business activities or otherwise, why may she not give her share in that way and *pay* a housekeeper? Stan's conception of a fine woman was absurd, old-fashioned, he wanted her to be the dispenser of a deep and sacrificial type of love, but Patricia could not give that kind; she realized this more and more each day.

But one evening Woozy came and reasoned with Patricia, pleaded with her, the result being that for a time the rebellious bride was placated; indeed Patsy made various good resolutions which she recorded day by day, or rather night by night, in her diary.

Thus on Friday: "Stan's eyes follow me so wistfully and appealingly that I feel shamed. What if he is dogmatic and insistent about the housekeeping? Probably his mother and all the good women he has ever known or read about have been like that."

And again on Saturday: "I register a vow to try—each day for two weeks I'll try. I'll woo the kitchen, the mending, the marketing. I'll study the menus. I'll try to be economical."

And on Sunday: "I can't help it, I hate housework. I despise it. If it wasn't that Stan is so pathetically funny in his joy at my attempts, I'd throw the whole thing up this minute."

And on Monday: "What's the use of persist-

ing in a thing that one does badly? I'm a misfit. My temper is worn to a frazzle. Perhaps Stan is right; he says I'm smoking too many cigarettes. Well, I'll try cutting down on them."

And on Tuesday: "Stan marches heroically about in his socks—the ones I've darned! I know they are lumpy; I choke over a laugh and end by weeping."

And on Wednesday: "I *must* be economical. I cannot make money elastic. My once cheerful Louis Tong has developed into a regular grouch. His grin has departed. He hates me in his domain. Sensible man, Louis Tong!"

And on Thursday: "Working for a wifely halo is some job. I've cut down on cigarettes, six a day, and Stan's approbation stares nakedly from his good clean eyes. Oh, he is dear and kind. A dull pain closes down on my heart as I realize my inability to measure up to his expectations. Stan, dear, I'm sorry. I'm sorrier than you'll ever know. I'm not really a quitter, but isn't all this frenzied drudgery a farce?"

And on Friday: "Rocks ahead! I can't keep this up much longer. I'm beaten before I start. Why should I make myself over into something I am not? Sewing and mending! Food, food, food! I could scream with the deadly dullness of it. I'm taking Stan as he is. Why can't he

take me as I am, faults and all, if he loves me as much as he says? If I loved a man as much as I *could* love, I'd probably be happy to scrub for him. That's it! I don't love Stan enough."

And on Saturday: "Each night I look into the mirror for my halo. It hasn't appeared—anyway halos are irritating. Haven't smoked at all to-day. Nervous as a cat!"

And on Sunday: "I've been sounding myself and my inability to meet this domestic exigency, and I conclude I have been brought up all wrong. My parents crippled me by their loving indulgence. I've never been trained to do anything except to lean on those who love me, and their sacrifices have made me pathetically useless. I'm only just awakening to this astounding fact."

On Monday Patricia did not write about household perplexities, but touched upon a matter of graver import: "After all have Stan and I much in common? Take literature, this wonderful literature that he's sacrificing everything for. He certainly has some antiquated ideas here. He eats up sentimental stuff that sickens me. 'You're all for showy brilliance,' he flung back at me to-day. 'Cold beauty isn't enough for suffering mankind. Why give them a stone when they hunger for bread?'"

"I told him he sounded like Billy Sunday, and

I acknowledged that beauty satisfies me. Walter Pater's chaste reticence quickens my pulses, Oscar Wilde's *verve* dazzles me, Shaw's cheery cynicism flatters me into believing that just Shaw and myself are the clever ones on earth. I say there's no excuse for writing anything, if one can't write it beautifully. I like outward beauty in all things; pretty clothes, homes of friendly dignity, all the graces of life. They charm me. When I told Stan this he said: 'They're not worth a *damn* without sincerity and heart.'

On Tuesday she wrote: "Deep down in my heart persists a belief in my ability to do *something* well, to give and take generously, as life demands."

And on Wednesday, after twelve days of vain effort to be a domestic wife, Patricia abandoned the attempt with this wail of despair: "I give it up. It's too much for me. Stan's pride has been flattered that I've tried and I've been able to preen myself a bit; but really I haven't done much good. I've been like the child helping its mother wipe the dishes, more of hindrance than a help. I'm backsliding again on cigarettes—a box and a half to-day. But in the words of my husband, I don't give a *damn!* I'm sick of holding in, of play-acting as a model wife. *From now on I'm going to be myself!*"

CHAPTER XIII

THE LURE OF CLOTHES

A WEEK passed . . . then suddenly came the crisis, through one of those little happenings that flash out, like sparks in a powder-mine, whenever the powder-mine is ready.

It was a morning in late September. There was a decided snap in the air. Gusts of wind whirled yellowing leaves from the trees, heaped them about the tree trunks or over the lawns, heralding Autumn. Patricia was bored, fretful, irritated. Life stagnated about her. She saw that in this marriage she had taken a reckless leap into the dark, and was now groping helplessly. Still, she did not reproach herself, but rather her husband. What right had Stanley to cheat her of the future his money had apparently offered? She had thought she loved him—yes—but that was in a certain setting. Taken out of that setting, she might never have considered him. Men were so conceited, so intensely vain of their *manhood!* The poorest, oldest, most decrepit man

fancies he may still win the loveliest of débutantes, he actually does!

Pat ordered Louis Tong to saddle her horse, but changed her mind and took the car. Fancy speeding in a Dodge! It belittled her emotions; stepped on the brakes of her spirit. But she laughed as she swung recklessly out of the rustic gate, nipped off a corner of it and sent it flying to the bulging-eyed envy of two small country boys hovering near.

Poor Pat! Her soul was unsteady, like this rattling machine as it plunged down the steep and rocky mountain road. The oaks, wildwood tangles of berries and trailing grape-vines failed to rouse in her a throb of interest, while the distant sparkle of the ocean only increased her exasperation. It symbolized the sea of life that she longed to be adventuring on, but was not.

Once on the well-paved boulevard leading into Santa Barbara, Patricia let the car out; it leaped forward, bringing tears to her eyes from the sting of the air. If she only had a *real* car, how she would have humored this restless demon within her!

As she turned up State Street she all but collided with a stunning dark blue car, evidently of French make. She stared enviously, then noticed

the driver, a smart, cock-sure young person in a dashing black and yellow sports outfit, who turned at that moment. An incredulous light dawned simultaneously in the eyes of both.

"Margot Régnier!" Patricia cried excitedly.

"Patricia!"

Their machines soon hugged the curb, and after a hasty exchange of confidences, they decided to park the plebeian Dodge and were off in the purring beauty.

Margot had been one of the most envied girls at Miss Spence's School. She had brains, or at least superficial brilliancy; and a dark beauty that amazed. Also money and charm. French on her father's side, Irish on her mother's, with all the dash and dare of her American upbringing, she had led her parents a merry chase. Six months after her coming-out party in New York, at the height of a spectacular social triumph, Pere Régnier happened in unexpectedly at a little smoker Margot was giving one evening, whereupon she was packed off unceremoniously to a Western College. Six months later she was politely asked to leave, much to her joy and her father's wrath and shame.

At her wit's end now for an entrance into longed-for freedom, Margot had married Don Hammond, a middle-aged fortune hunter; but her

father, still the source of supplies, was not ready for them to return to New York, so she and Don were temporarily caged with a dull and dowdy aunt who owned a mansion perched on a neighboring cliff.

"There's my tale of woe," laughed Margot. "Now tell me yours, old darling!"

Flattered by the interest in her career indicated in Margot's shining dark eyes, Patricia gradually told her whole story, nor did she conceal her present impatience, dissatisfaction, rebellion. She drove home aflutter with excitement.

But a few days later when Margot called and had tea with them in their little chintz-hung living room, she saw that Stan was going to be unmanageable about her friend.

"I don't like her," he said decisively afterwards, "I don't like the beautiful shell of her, nor the little farce of her soul."

On the other hand Margot was frankly pleased with Stan and rhapsodized openly to Patricia about him; but Creighton persistently refused her invitations, so Patsy went alone. These lavish parties of Margot's led to other invitations that called for new clothes. This stirred the young wife's resentment, for she had had nothing new in months.

Patricia was at Margot's one afternoon when

the maid unpacked a box from a famous New York dressmaker's.

"What gorgeous things!" sighed Pat, enviously.

"Why don't you order a gown or two yourself?" suggested Margot as she lifted a creamy lace gown from its tissue paper wrappings. "This sort of thing would be wonderful on you, chérie, with your short curls. I could send in your orders with mine, and ask them to mail the bill to your husband."

"Oh, I couldn't do that!"

"Why not? Don't be a darn little fool. What's a husband for? Work him, my dear. Use your sex charm. Men are such innocent babies—lambs led to the slaughter."

She gathered up two exquisite negligées, an orchid creation over a flesh chiffon, and a luscious apricot with dashes of turquoise blue and, squinting her dazzling dark eyes until they became mere black slits through her heavy, curling lashes, she said:

"Here, take this orchid affair. Something new gives one confidence . . ." Her laugh disconcerted Patricia, who blushed painfully, then blushed because she had blushed.

"I hate this underhand feminine way of getting things," she rebelled.

"You ought to have been a boy, Pat. You're

so absurdly honest. Women must be tactful." Again that provocative laugh.

"That's it," replied Patricia with fierce earnestness. "A man can walk upright in the sun, but a woman has to creep and fawn. I detest it."

Nevertheless she listened to Margot's tempting, for clothes are a disease with women. Against her will she listened. One by one Pat's arguments for the decent course (meaning self-restraint) were brushed aside, and before she left she had sent in an order to Lucile for two simple but appallingly expensive evening gowns, and an evening cloak. Also Margot persuaded her that her old riding suit could be improved upon, and, well . . . why not?

Patricia went home torn between happy excitement over the prospect of some new clothes, and a guilty feeling that she had betrayed Stan.

That night at dinner she exerted herself to draw her husband out of the detached, impersonal attitude that he had held too persistently of late, and finally obtained his promise to go to Margot's next party. Here it was that Stan met Margot's husband, Don Hammond, an old wreck (he was over forty and looked for all the world like a shriveled, Bellflower apple) who before his marriage was a poverty-stricken, would-be artist, living by his wits and social position. Margot



Don Hammond. That old Don Juan is like a yellow plant that has grown under a moldy board

accepted him because his frost-bitten speech amused her, and because, being subject to her gifts, he would be meek and lowly under her commands.

"A lot of rotters," Stanley characterized them as they drove home. "That old Don Juan is like a yellow plant that has grown under a moldy board. I *forbid* you to have anything more to do with him or his crowd."

"Forbid!"

"Yes, forbid," he repeated. "If you're still a child, I must treat you like one. . . ." Then after a second, through his teeth, "Thank God you're not a liar. You're not like that deceitful cat Margot. Believe me, she's no friend of yours."

That night Patricia wrote in her diary: "I have analyzed myself unmercifully and I admit that I am a joke as a housekeeper and homemaker. I'm not making good as an artist. I'm persistently unhappy. I'm a round peg in a square hole. My quarrels with Stan always end in reconciliations, but they cheapen me in my own eyes. To take clothes, presents, anything from a man one does not love, even if he is called one's husband, is in my opinion contemptibly low. This idea grows on me, constantly shaming me."

And the next night she wrote: "Once I said that I did not want love to dominate me; now I

am convinced that I have not had a peep at love, even through a half-closed door. Nine-tenths of the women in the world never do! I won't be one of these women. I want the rare, unshared things. *I want to know what love is even if I get hurt in knowing!"*

CHAPTER XIV

PATRICIA DECIDES TO LEAVE HER HUSBAND

A FORTNIGHT later Stanley announced to Patricia that he was going to Los Angeles to see her father, and this brought her former suspicions to a certainty.

"You went to see him before—didn't you?"

"Yes," he admitted calmly, "I did. I had to. I'd take any course that would help us toward happiness."

"I think it was contemptible of you. I can't believe it."

"And I can't believe—these," he retorted, striking his hand against a pile of her bills heaped on his desk. "It was beneath you to burden me like this, Pat, just when I need your help. It was that odious Margot's influence, I know it was."

Followed a terrific culminative quarrel. Patricia tried to put spirit into her excuses, but at heart she knew herself to be in the wrong. How could those miserable bills have accumulated so rapidly? Of course the new car (in spite of trad-

ing in the Dodge) made a big item; then she had suffered heavy losses at bridge. But eleven thousand dollars! Incredible!

"I had to amuse myself in some way," she contended.

"Amuse yourself, certainly, within reason, but why in thunder didn't you trust me, ask me for money? I'm not a monster."

"Why does a woman always have to humiliate herself and ask money of a man?"

"Because marriage is a partnership. Besides, he earns the money."

"If it's a partnership, why doesn't he consult her about what he spends? I say there's no liberty for a woman as long as she has to beg money of a man. When I married you I expected to have the beautiful things I've always craved. I knew you were making plenty of money . . ."

Stan frowned.

"I thought you loved me," she continued.

"Lord, that word *love!* The most abused word in the English language. You haven't even a bowing acquaintance with it."

"Perhaps not. I hate housework, that's certain. If you want me to stay with you, you'll have to make some other arrangements."

"If I want you to stay with me . . . ?"

"Yes, I can go back to New York, go to work."

He stared at her for a long, steady moment. She could feel the blood rush into her cheeks; but she shut her jaws hard and steeled her will.

"I'm sick of this farce," she added as he turned away.

They separated for the night without a kiss, and Patricia lay awake for hours sounding the situation, longing to go to him, hating herself because she could not summon the right emotion to meet the moment, wondering, analyzing . . .

II

The next morning Stanley announced his decision.

"I've come to a sharp turn in the road," he said. "I need advice. Instead of going to a lawyer, I'm going to your father. I like him and trust him. Come, go with me, Pat," he urged. "Pocket your pride."

Patricia's eyes grew misty as tender memories of her mother and father flooded in, pictures of them as they were, and would be. She concentrated with fierce steadiness on the zinnias, her effort at control causing her throat to ache intolerably. "Why not go?" tempted the still

small voice within; but aloud she said: "I'll decide and let you know at luncheon, Stan."

"Why, bless you," he cried in delighted surprise, "bless you, Pat, my dear." And to Louis Tong's grinning confusion he swept her out of her chair into his arms, while the Chinaman beat a hasty retreat with the hot coffee. For a second Pat clung to her husband, listening to the blunt sincerity of his devotion. Why could she not be what he wanted her to be? That model and priceless housewife of biblical times whom her father used to quote.

"She . . . worketh willingly with her hands. She riseth also while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens."

III

All through the morning Patricia wrestled with herself; she resolved to have reached a decision when the sun had climbed to the topmost rocky peak before her. She lay in the hammock and, fascinated, watched the sunlight creep up the hillside, watched it steal softly over the sage and scrub oaks, now touching a clump of eucalyptus trees that cut cathedral-like into the hazy blue, then insinuating itself on and up the brown,

seared hillside until it blazed on the topmost ledge!

During this Woozy came and fought her; made her see things that she had known before, but never acknowledged.

WOOZY

It's abominable! You're thinking of running away.

PATRICIA

(*Defiant*) I can't endure this any longer. It's no use trying. I crave action, movement—New York. I want to *live!*

WOOZY

Haven't you any sense of duty? Or decency? You've run away once already.

PATRICIA

I can't help it. I must work out my own destiny without the interference of any man. I'm not going to do domestic drudgery.

WOOZY

If you support yourself in New York, you'll have to do more disagreeable things.

PATRICIA

I'll be free anyway.

WOOZY

No. A woman is never free. Why can't you speak the truth? Do you want me to tell you why you are unhappy here?

PATRICIA

Why?

WOOZY

You think you haven't found your ideal of a man. If you had, you'd do the drudgery gladly. And economize gladly. It's this treacherous glint of wings that is luring you on, promising something magical, enchanting, beyond, just beyond your reach . . .

PATRICIA

You're clever to see that, Woozy.

WOOZY

You hope to find your ideal in New York, but—it's a mirage, Pat.

PATRICIA

(*Dreamily*) I wonder. I'm going to find out. I'm going to follow the truest instincts of my womanhood. Thousands of women spoil their lives because they compromise before an issue like this. I'm not going to compromise. I owe that to myself. And in the end I'll hold the fluttering wings of happiness. You'll see.

WOOZY

Why didn't you think of this before you married Stan?

PATRICIA

They didn't give me time, father and Stan between them. They overwhelmed me with mascu-

line insistence, as men always do. Stan happened to want me so he carried me off. He took it for granted that I loved him. Now he's furious because I can't live up to his foolish idea of what I ought to be. Why didn't he leave me alone?

WOOZY

(*Pleading*) Patsy, you think you're unhappy with Stan, but you'll be unhappier without him. Besides, you are legally his wife. He has rights.

PATRICIA

Don't be silly. Stan doesn't want me—against my will. (*Tenderly*) Poor Stan! (*After an embarrassed silence*) Woozy, I'm much obliged to you for one thing, you've made me understand *why* I don't love Stan in the ideal way. It just came to me—like a flash.

WOOZY

Why?

PATRICIA

I won't say it. I won't humiliate myself.

IV

High noon and the sun-tipped ledge! Patricia shut her lips and steeled herself to her decision. The struggle was over. She rose to answer the deep, musical call of the gongs, announcing luncheon. When Stan came out of his study, elabo-

rately casual, she went up to him at once and met his eyes squarely.

"I can't go with you this afternoon, dear, but you can take father and mother my love; please tell them I am sorry I couldn't come—and I've written father a letter—here!" She slipped it into Stan's coat pocket, then drew him down to her and kissed him. At which he weakened.

"Say the word, darling, and I won't go, perhaps it would be better, perhaps . . ."

"No, no," she urged, "you must go—*now*. We must have the courage to carry through what we believe is right, both of us."

Stan's eyes said unutterable things, and from the train he called to her: "Good-by, sweetheart! It's all coming out right. I'll be back day after to-morrow. I've a surprise for you then. Good-by! Good-by!"

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But Patricia knew that when he came back on the day after to-morrow she would be gone!

CHAPTER XV

"YOUR UNRULY PAT"

IT was characteristic of Creighton that in his interview with Newton Lydig, which took place over luncheon at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, he at first concealed the cause of his anxiety; his loyalty to Patricia led him to present the situation in its most favorable aspects. And yet the novelist was puzzled by a flitting wistfulness in the young man's smile.

"Patricia's been splendid," Stan declared. "She has buckled down to plain living—you'd be surprised. Up and dressed at eight o'clock, and doing her very best to manage things in the home and—help me. She's even cut down on her cigarettes."

Lydig rather plumed himself on this development. "It's the old story," he said. "A happy marriage will do more for a girl than all the teaching and preaching in the world. Pat has found herself. I congratulate you, both of you."

Again he noticed that enigmatical smile and an uneasy or embarrassed shifting of his head and shoulders.

"What's the matter? Don't you deserve congratulations?"

"Oh, yes—er—you bet we do."

"Then why the peculiar manner? You're keeping back something, Oh!" with a flash of pleased anticipation, "is it—?"

Stan shook his head slowly. "No, not that."

"She isn't ill?"

"No."

"Anything wrong with your work? Haven't you been making progress with your book?"

The answer came with an odd little laugh as Creighton tapped a leather portfolio that he had brought with him. "There are thirty-thousand words in here, done in the last month—since I saw you."

"Fine! I don't see what's troubling you. Come! Speak up!"

"Oh, nothing special—one or two little—er—flare-ups."

"What about?"

"Oh, nerves—that's all. You see it's hard for Pat to be economical. She ran into a bunch of spenders up there, rich people who have nothing to do but jazz around and blow their money and

—it's only natural Pat should want nice clothes, isn't it?"

"Ye-es. And nice clothes are expensive."

"They sure are. Besides she got a new car and—a few other things."

At this he grew serious and, beginning awkwardly, came presently to the heart of the matter, which was that, in spite of brave efforts and a promising start, Patricia was profoundly unreconciled to the life they were leading at Montecito.

"The mistake I made," Stanley admitted, "was in trying to put over this simple life thing after we were married. I ought to have told her before—you can't get away from that. She knew I was making a lot of money when I married her, and she had a right to assume that I would go on making it. We've got to be fair to her."

"But—we went over all that."

"You and I went over it. Pat didn't go over it. She wasn't consulted. That's one thing that makes her sore. She doesn't see why her whole plan of existence must be changed because I want to write a book. I can put myself in her place. She thought she was marrying a rich man. There are some people in this world who want their own way so strongly that it makes them ill, pretty nearly kills 'em, if they don't get it. The only salvation for people like that is to do the thing

they want to do and take the consequences. You chucked the school-teaching business when you were a young chap and went off to Paris, didn't you, sir? Patsy told me about it. You *had* to go, didn't you?"

The father admitted this.

"Well, Pat feels about New York the way you felt about Paris. She won't be satisfied anywhere else—not now. And I'm going back into the movies. I'm going to give her all the money she wants."

Lydig stared in surprise. "That means surrender—absolute surrender?"

"That's what it means," Stan nodded.

"Have you told her?"

"Not yet, I wanted to tell you first."

"Then all that we said the other day—all our arguments—our reasons—what about them?"

"All true, every one of 'em. The ideal thing to do is to stick to the simple living plan and fight it out on the present lines up at Montecito, I know that; but I'm not big enough to put it over. You couldn't put it over either. You had Patricia with you for years, sir, and with all your love and wisdom you couldn't change her character or force her into new ways of living, could you? Well, neither can I. You side-stepped pretty nearly every straight issue that came up, didn't you?"

You let her smoke, you let her be extravagant, you let her lie in bed mornings . . . and so on. Well, I'm no miracle worker. I'm going to side-step too.”

“I wonder if you aren't mistaken about Patricia,” the father reflected. “Perhaps she's adjusting herself better than you think to this new life.”

Stan shook his head.

“No, Pat's eating her heart out for New York City, so I'm arranging for a transfer to the Eastern studio.”

“But your work? Your ambition to do big things? Does all that go by the board?”

“Guess it does. I care more for Pat than I do for fame. It wouldn't satisfy me to turn out the greatest novel ever written and lose Patricia. I should say not! Besides, this novel that I've been doing,” he picked up the portfolio, “it isn't any good. I'm ashamed of it. I've ground away at it day after day, but the stuff is hopeless. I wouldn't let my publisher have it. There! I'll show you what I think of my novel.”

They had withdrawn to the smoking room and were enjoying their *demi-tasse* in front of a massive fireplace where logs were blazing pleasantly against an in-creeping Pacific fog. With a quick movement Creighton opened the leather flap and

tossed his thirty-thousand words into the fire.

"You're crazy!" cried Lydig, trying to rescue the flaming pages; but it was too late.

"Not crazy—that's the sanest thing I ever did. I'm a good judge of my work. I know when it's rotten. I can't create characters when I'm sick at heart. I'll never do another stroke of novel-writing, *never* until Patricia is happy, really happy."

The father sat fascinated, profoundly impressed, and did not speak until that unfortunate mass of type-writing had smoldered into ashes.

"Poor child!" he sighed. "I hoped it would be different when she married."

The young man answered confidently: "It's going to work out all right. Just wait until I break the news to her. She'll be a mighty good imitation of a happy girl, if I'm any judge. You'll find Pat changed for the better, sir. Oh! I've got a letter for you. She gave it to me the last thing—with her fondest love. Here you are!" He produced a long envelope addressed to her father in Patricia's familiar writing—it was the first letter Newton Lydig had received from his daughter since the night of her elopement.

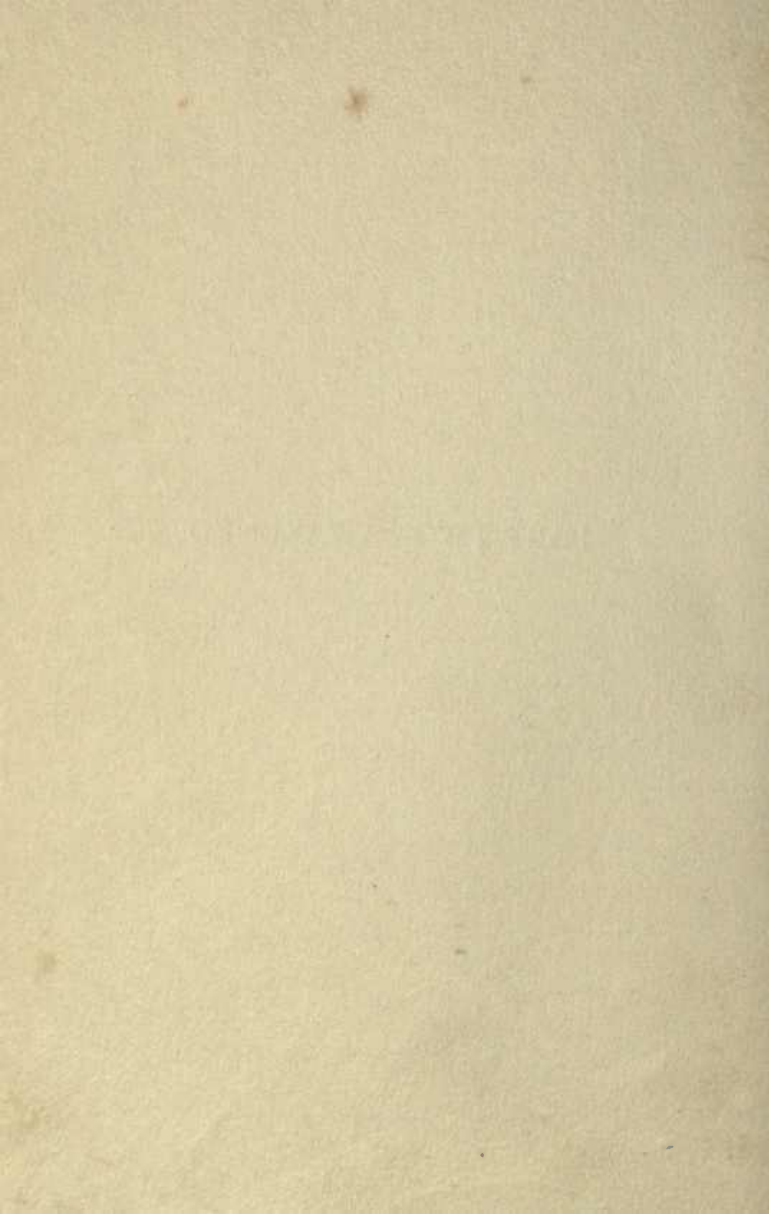
Then came the shattering news, that penitent but inexorable letter in which Patricia notified her father and her husband that before Stanley re-

turned to their little Montecito home she would have left for New York *to earn her own living!* The irony of it! Just when the eager lover was preparing the surprise that was to make his beloved radiant! Too late!

In a separate note to Stan, enclosed in the other, she begged him to forgive her, but not follow her or try to see her or force her to come back to him. Then, woman-like, after assuring him that it would be quite useless and disastrous for him to interfere with her purposes, she added this exasperatingly emotional postscript:

“There are some moments, Stan . . . some moments that we have shared . . . you remember? Do not let them fade. Do not let *any one* make you forget your unruly Pat.”

PART TWO—AWAKENED



CHAPTER I

PIERRE

“What a dark world—who knows?—
Ours to inhabit is!
One touch, and what a strange
Glory might burst on us,
What a hid universe!”

ONE of the tragedies in women's lives is that marriage does not always bring full awakening. Often the profoundest depths of a woman's nature are not stirred for years after a life-mate has been chosen. In some cases, alas! they are never stirred; or again, by a man other than the life-mate, as Patricia was fated to know. Thus far her life had been that of a spoiled child; a selfish, impulsive, forceful young woman; not a real woman, as she was now to realize.

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We may pass over the first four months that Patricia spent in New York—four months of liberty! No need to detail the struggles, humiliations, deprivations that she endured (gladly on

the whole!) as the price she paid. In the end her talents and power of will conquered, and she found herself, after a few weeks, earning her own living, as she had dreamed of doing, without being beholden for a penny to any man, whether husband or father. To tide her over the first necessitous period, Patsy borrowed several hundred dollars from skeptical but generous Margot, being resolved at least to accept no more masculine favors.

Liberty!

If the truth must be told, this proved, on attainment, to be a rather dreary, gray-tinged thing, for here was this indolent, luxury-loving young woman, dwelling in a single darkish room (with no private bath!) in a New York boarding house up near Columbia. And caged from nine to five in a dingy building on Fourth Avenue where she dashed off little fashion articles for an advertising concern. At thirty-five dollars a week.

Such a thing is pride!

As for the compensations of her new estate, these did not immediately appear, and Patricia suffered from loneliness and disillusionment (but would have died rather than admit it) through many dragging weeks.

Then suddenly came the burst of glory, the glint of wings—the man!

Never would she forget that day of their first meeting. Every detail of it was graven on her memory. It was on one of those golden Saturday afternoons with their precious free hours that she had only learned to appreciate since she became a breadwinner. With a sigh of relief Patricia had closed her desk, closed the door of her office, shot down seventeen flights in the elevator, and made her way over to the Avenue, her gracious and beloved Fifth Avenue.

The shop windows drew her like magnets, as of yore, only now window-shopping was her limit. She pored over their contents, luxurious soft furs, exquisite cobwebby lingerie, chic little hats—each in turn held her attention. And oddly mingled with a glow of pride in her hardly-earned freedom was a pang of self-pity as she watched other women alight from their limousines and sail carelessly past her—as purchasers!

A voice behind her made her turn sharply, she knew those lilting tones of that voice, high, bird-like: "Patricia!"

She was looking into the glowing face of her old friend, Janice King, now Mrs. Shephard Claremont. Janice was the daughter of an old New York family; one of those families that lift their chin ever so slightly, and, in well-bred voices seem to say that the *really nice* people don't go in for

the things that these wild young creatures of our supposedly Smart Set indulge in . . .

But Janice herself was lovable, the kindest and blithest of God's creatures. It was not her fault that she had been held up as a shining example from babyhood. Pat liked her too well to hate her, in spite of the fact that the difference of the poles lay between them temperamentally—which proves genuine affection.

"Where shall we go to luncheon?" the gay voice asked with its pleasing staccatos, as Janice hurried her friend into her snug little motor.

"Anywhere."

They drove to Louis Sherry's tea-room at 58th Street, filled with association for Patricia, since the old Lydig home on Park Avenue was just around the corner.

"Now tell me everything," sighed Janice, contentedly, after she had ordered. "I have a general idea of your mad career since you left us (your mother wrote to mine) but . . ." she broke off with that penetrating glance that invariably left Patricia wondering why Janice loved her when she so thoroughly disapproved of her. "Oh! Pat," she breathed, "what a girl you are! To elope—and run away again, all within a year! Come, tell me about it. Your husband—what is he like?"

Then, wide-eyed, she listened to the story, and could scarcely believe her ears when Pat came to her present phase as an humble toiler, and sketched in her boarding-house—the horror of its marble-halled entrance, its hideous carved ebony table, its encumbering chairs wherein no human could find comfort; also the twilight gloom of its halls, where one groped for the key-hole with trained, experimenting fingers. Oh! the dinginess of it! The impertinent darkey at the elevator and telephone switchboard, the dining-room, presided over by that shrewd and heroically corseted master-piece of marceled importance whom Pat had christened the Super-dreadnaught, her landlady.

“But Patricia—how *could* you! Why ostracize yourself? Are you absolutely—crazy?”

“Perhaps.”

The keen, absorbed interest in Janice’s face died out; in its place came a troubled incredulous expression bordering on pity.

“But . . . after you were married . . . surely . . . why the intimacy, the sweetness . . . I don’t understand . . .”

“No, you couldn’t. You’d never understand the desire a girl has to earn her own living—the desire I have.”

Janice shrugged noncommittally. Money, of

course, could not interest her. She had plenty of it—always had had.

“Surely, you’re not counting on making a fortune, Pat,” she smiled, and at this her friend’s pride flared.

“I don’t know. Just now my thirty-five dollars a week is a fortune to me. At any rate it’s mine through my own efforts.”

Again the quizzical, half-pitying look.

“But wifhood, motherhood—are they meaningless to you, Pat?”

Patricia blushed under the expression of those eyes that stabbed with their sweetness. She knew Janice was thinking of her six months’ old baby, she had told her about him almost at once, and of her good-natured, mediocre husband, Shephard Claremont, a little bald, thin person with an irritating, nervous cough. And Pat gave back her pity with a vengeance. No shining river of adventure for Janice—only a placid, safe little pond, strewn with a few pretty water lilies and set about with graceful, weeping willows.

“You didn’t love your husband, that’s certain,” Janice concluded.

“I was attracted to him,” Patricia defended. “He’s fine, Janice, really big and fine, better than I am . . . only . . . well, it wasn’t right for me to stay with him, under the circumstances.”

Behind Janice's reserve could be felt her mental comment, "Pat will settle down and be all right when she has a baby of her own." That used to be the diagnosis of the old doctor, "Tut, tut, Mrs. Lydig, Patricia will be all right when she is married and has some babies," which always comforted her mother and lashed Patricia to fury.

Presently they said good-by, as Janice was due early at her apartment by reason of Shephard, Jr., and was full of agitations over not arriving on time. Patricia took a bus and rode down as far as Madison Square, charming in the purple bloom of an early winter twilight. The great space was restful to her nerves, the trees, shrubs, and the first faint street lights partook of the mysterious beauty of the hour. She felt a craving for something good to read, something that would lift her out of this dull stretch, and went into Brentano's—never would she speak that name again without a quickening of the heart, for it was there that . . .

She walked into the shop, searched hurriedly up and down the aisles (it was within half hour of closing time) and finally paused before a row of books that appealed. A title caught her eye and she laid her hand eagerly upon it; simultaneously another hand reached for it. Their fingers touched. A shock, definite, amazing! Pat did not stir, did not look up for what seemed

an unbelievably long time. Then, breathless with expectancy, she lifted her eyes.

Out of an extraordinarily sensitive face, gray eyes looked at her, sought her out, the sum of her. A slim, sensitive face it was, flooded with such light and understanding that her eyes seemed drawn there to stay. His short black mustache contributed to her impression that he must be a foreigner, even before she noticed the blue of his resplendent French uniform.

It was incredible that she did not know him! Incredible that she could not speak to him!

After a few seconds, a woman came up from behind and he turned to her. Patricia caught a glimpse of the woman's face and her heart lifted magically, then sank with a miserable apprehension. It was Margot!

"Pat . . . what luck! I've meant to hunt you up ever since I came home, last week, but . . ."

"Did—did your husband come with you?"

"Oh, yes. Good old Don!" She shrugged.

"Then—?"

"Oh, *he's* a friend—an old friend of the family—from France." She half turned, but Pat tugged at her sleeve, scarcely realizing that she whispered, "Don't tell him—please—"

Margot's keen, worldly-wise black eyes twinkled, then grew shrewd.

“Pat!—not *you!* Flirting—already! Pierre!” she called.

Once more those intent gray eyes were searching Patricia's. Margot's voice came as from a great distance, gay, careless . . .

“Oh, Capitaine Boissard, meet my friend, Mrs. Creighton, an old school chum;” then, interpreting the pleading of Pat's eyes, she added mischievously: “*Prenez-guard*—you know how dangerous these pretty young widows are.”

CHAPTER II

THE DEPTHS ARE STIRRED

“. . . Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken; . . .”

FATE surely had a finger in this business, for they met again, these two, the very next day; in all that measureless, boundless city of New York they met again—accidentally.

Patricia was on her way home from her work, in the late afternoon. A soft rain was falling. Street lights gleamed like pale flowers through the mist; freshly-washed shrubs and trees and the wet earth yielded their fragrance as she got off the bus and walked up Morningside Drive. The high black iron fence encircling L’Eglise de Notre Dame stood out distinctly, its individual spikes glistening with rain drops. Through the widely-flung gates she caught the radiance of the altar, alight with hundreds of hopefully gleaming tapers. There was an atmosphere of security and comfort here, a suggestion of peace. She hesitated at the gateway and, as she looked, Capitaine Boissard

came out, his blue overcoat and the red and gold of his cap cutting assertively into the luminous grayness. Her heart leaped as their eyes met and she realized that the thought of him had never left her since that first glance the day before. She had reproached herself for letting him think her a widow. Now she understood why she had done this. She must have had a subconscious knowledge that he was a Catholic—an ardent one . . .

The rain beat in a merry, resonant patter on the taut silk of her umbrella as he came up to her. "Oh—you!" he exclaimed, "What a good omen to meet you here! I called on you this afternoon."

Words deserted her. There were pulses in her throat that throbbed excitedly. What an extraordinary face he had! She was too happy—it frightened her. And that little way he had of laughing under his breath, so amused and interested! His intonations and French *rs* were delicious—quaint, different. He was utterly unlike any one Patricia had ever known.

"You came to see me this afternoon?" she managed at last, "but, you see, I'm a worker, not a lady of leisure, Capitaine."

"A worker?"

"Yes. Only this afternoon I fell into a wo-

derful new position, head of the Art Department on a Millinery Trade's Review. I'm feeling mighty proud of myself."

"Ah . . . that is ver-ry interesting. You must tell me more about it. You American women . . . you are remarkable! To live alone . . . you *do* live alone?"

She nodded.

"You were going into the church," he added. "I am so hap-py—you, too, are a Catholic?"

She woke with a start.

"Oh, no!" she hastened—"not a Catholic, no, no!"

"No?"

"No, I am not religious," she said uncomfortably.

He studied her face intently, thoughtfully, while she admired his profile—thin, aquiline, aristocratic.

"But you *are* religious, ve-ry religious," he protested confidently. "You do not know it. You love beauty keenly. In pictures, books, nature. And religion makes our lives beautiful. Come! To her amazement she made no protest, but entered the church with him and they knelt together. The gray evening faintly illumined the windows, but the altar glowed, warm and vital. She felt his fingers close on her arm; tears gathered and

slipped down her cheeks; but her heart felt quiet as a summer lake.

Once outside he bent down to her and, half-teasingly, half-endearingly, whispered:

“Pat-r-ricia!”

She did not remonstrate and they began to laugh like children. At her door he left her with a warning to be ready in a couple of hours. He was going to take her to dinner.

II

There followed for Patricia a deliriously happy month, yet one of torturing deception and self-deception, wherein she found each day some new and adequate reason for not confessing to Pierre that she was a married woman. No better record of events and emotions during this period of soul awakening could be given than that taken from her diary:

Friday night.

I must not keep up this deception with Pierre—already he is Pierre to me. I *must* tell him I am a married woman. I did not mean to mislead him. Margot was so quick to act on a mere impulse of mine. After a while I’ll tell him. Certainly—after awhile. I’ll tell him when I’m a

little surer . . . of what? Why, that he will forgive my deception. No, no, Pat! You're lying to yourself. You mean to wait until you are sure that he loves you as you want him to love you, as you, yourself, have come to love him.

Saturday.

Patricia, my poor child! What have you done? You *must* tell Pierre the truth. You are in the light, it is dazzling, blinding, but after it will come grayness!

Sunday.

Pierre hates lipsticks and rouge. We went shopping yesterday afternoon for some things to take back to his sister in France. I hung over a case of adorable chased gold vanity cases, but when I called his attention to them, I sensed his disapproval. His tone was slightly contemptuous.

"It would be an insult to give a *nice* French girl such a gift," he said.

The French clerks who waited on us were frankly delighted with us both. They beamed and caressed us with voice and eyes, and deferentially called me *Madame!* I blushed, my heart lifting, and Pierre furtively pressed my hand.

"I am v-er-ry pr-rroud," he whispered.

Joy and fear struggled in my heart. I will tell him soon. I must. I know he cares. I am sure.

Monday.

Happy, so happy . . .

Tuesday.

Evidently Pierre and Margot have not discussed me. I saw Margot to-day and she did not seem to know that I have been meeting Pierre . . .

When I am with him I feel that we are alone, even in the heart of a crowd. We have found a way of walking hand in hand without detection! His military overcoat has an immense pocket into which we can both slip our hands, his covering mine . . . such a little thing but intimate, poignantly sweet.

Wednesday night.

Pierre has been called to Canada on a mission connected with the recruiting of Poles. He telephoned me to meet him at the Metropolitan Gallery at four o'clock. He was pacing up and down in front of the huge Museum as I got off the bus, the wind whipping his long overcoat about his high brown-laced boots.

The air had that cloudy effect that suggests

snow; it was snappy, invigorating. The thought of our temporary parting kept me silent, but drew us subtly closer. His imperative eyes frightened me. I began a little nonsensical running conversation about my experiences in the office and showed him some highly colored poster girls ready for the next issue of our magazine. He laughed under his breath, amused, interested, but I felt him brush all that aside and go on searching the mind and heart of me.

We fenced, keeping each other at a distance, and yet were drawn irresistibly nearer and nearer. We passed through the rooms examining various paintings. As a connoisseur, he listened to me deferentially, nodding his head.

"Ah—yes—you know."

We paused before a group of Sorollas—our eyes drawn to his "Bathers." The hint of beach, the jolly girl, brown and radiant, the sunshine caught in the white sail that the youth holds about her, then the flash of the waves in the background! Light, youth, the sea!

I became conscious that our shoulders were close, our hands clasped. My throat ached with emotion. Our eyes met. Mine filled. My lips trembled.

"Ah—dea-r girl," he whispered, "beauty is life itself to you."

Outside it had commenced to snow, fine powdery snow that blurred and obscured everything. People on the avenue were black specks blown through whirling whiteness. We stood in an alcove, ostensibly watching, but in reality absorbed in this throbbing unrecognized drama between us.

"Why, look," I cried childishly, "a button gone!"

"I know," he smiled, his hand unconsciously reaching for the top button of his overcoat. I thought perhaps you would—sew one on for me?"

A lightning shot of remembrance came to me. Stan—and his buttons! But it did not check the warm answer of my heart!

"Of course, if you can find one of those odd blue military buttons."

"If not . . . could you not *move* one . . . ?"

Then—what I had dreaded and longed for—happened. His arms closed hungrily round me. I tried to speak, to protest, struggle away from him, but I could not. My lips lifted naturally to his.

That such sweetness could be in the world! It was all inexpressibly lovely things merged, cypress and eucalyptus trees outlined against blazing sunsets, the hush of twilight over still waters, the lilting tones of a child—the ache of beauty that is half pleasure, half pain.

We were very silent the rest of the evening. He talked a little of France, of his home, its gardens. . . . At eleven we went to the station, but he did not kiss me again. He put me in a taxi, closed the door and stood waving good-by.

Saturday.

I hurried home from the office to see if there was any mail. Letters have become of amazing importance to me. One from father that set my conscience on fire with remorse. And one from Stan. Good, kind Stan! I know now what he must have felt for me, evidently still feels. I am sorry, bitterly self-reproachful; but I cannot give up Pierre. Nothing can take him from me. He belongs to me. He is my rightful mate. Nothing can separate us. Creed? No, certainly not. He has lived in the trenches. Creeds did not matter there.

Monday.

A letter from Pierre. I sat down on my couch and held the large white square for a moment, studying the fine, print-like writing before opening it. It was exquisitely restrained, almost disappointingly so, but the fragrance of our feeling for each other hung indefinitely about it.

"Why," he asked, "must our souls, that think

together, be separated by this small thing, a breath, a nothing, yet indispensable—the spoken word? . . .”

Then came his stabbing news. Soon, very soon, he was to sail home to France! The ache at my heart made it impossible for me to read further for some moments. He was to come back to New York for ten days or so before sailing.

Wednesday.

Pierre is back. I did not know anything could thrill me as did the sound of his voice over the wire. Our separation has seemed endless. We had a gay dinner at our favorite little French restaurant, Forty-eighth Street, west of Sixth Avenue. There is a charming *intime* air about the place, gayety, color, movement. But the words of a French song echo in my ears:

“Mais viendra le jour des adieux,
Car il faut que les femmes pleurent
Et que les hommes curieux
Tentent les horizons que leurent.”

Coming home in the car he put his arm about me, kissed my eyes, lips, hair. I protested faintly, drew away, trying to explain that I was an unhappy, wicked wife, but ended by creeping closer to him while I drank in his words:

“Ah—*chér-ie, chér-ie*, I have waited for you all my life.”

Saturday.

Pierre talked to me of his religion this evening. He never antagonizes, is always tactful and intuitive.

“I know, I understand something of what you feel, Pierre,” I conceded, “the aesthetic side of your church appeals to me, too,

‘The storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim, religious light,’

the silence, the candles . . . all the restful beauty of it. But there are other aspects, that seem medieval—to *me*, I say: Why not let me be religious in my own way?”

Our conversation turned into other fields. Pierre touched upon a possible *métier* for himself here in America. I was amazed! He is well past thirty, yet he has done nothing but write a few polished French verses for various conservative papers in Paris, though, of course, he served bravely in the war. He has leaned upon his family, has studied, read, cultivated the arts—and himself. He has become the delightful companion that I have always wanted, but . . . an

uneasy comparison insinuated itself into my mind. While Stan was assuming his father's debts, setting aside his own desires and working at a hated task, Pierre was accepting the support of his parents. Stan is crude and unfinished. Pierre is perfection. But . . . after all is love based on worthiness?

Sunday.

Our precious days are slipping by. Pierre has not spoken any binding word of love, but content is in my heart. We can never be separated. He will go back to France for six or seven weeks, then he will return to me. He belongs to me.

Monday.

Pierre grew heated on the subject of the widespread contempt of parental authority in America. In contrast he pictured the almost worshipful regard of young people in France for their parents. I suppose we go to one extreme, while they go to the other.

Tuesday.

In one corner of my heart I have an oppressing sense of guilt. My happiness is full and brimming, but—am I not like a thief with his

stolen jewel? Why is life such a bully? I can't tell Pierre about Stan and risk his love, I simply cannot. The hours and days pass . . .

Wednesday.

Nothing matters now. Pierre has spoken. It was last evening. I have heard him *say* what I have longed to hear. My heart sings, sings! He seemed intensely excited when he came for me. His eyes fairly blazed. I had put on a simple rose georgette gown, as we were to dance after our dinner, and he had sent me three perfect pink rose-buds, long stemmed, delicate, fragrant. I was pinning them on as I came out of the elevator and my eyes fell under his ardent gaze.

Once in the taxi and speeding out the Drive, Pierre drew me back into his arms without speaking. I could feel his heart beat. Mine was racing as excitedly as his. My arms went up about his neck quite shamelessly, my cheek rested against his shoulder.

"Ah—ché-rie," he whispered, "I don't need to tell you—already I have said it . . . in many ways. You have understood . . . I love you. I want you with me *always*."

I began to cry then, softly, happily. His hands smoothed my hair, caressed me with a tenderness that hurt.

How foolish, absurd, to think that the most modern of modern flappers, seemingly hard, cold, calculating, is not the same eternal primitive Eve when touched by the magical and revealing power of genuine love! I listened to his old, old story of the tranquil fireside. I could see him at the piano, the firelight touching his hands, lingering on his face, could picture myself waiting on him, loving him. I trembled as he spoke . . . of children . . . Yes, at heart we women are all alike . . . *But I could not tell him!*

Sunday.

Pierre has gone. I cannot believe it . . . Early this morning his great ship lifted anchor and sailed away, taking all that I love best in the world. How can I wait for his return? I can feel his kisses burning on either cheek, the little conventional station kisses . . . I could not go to the boat . . . And I could not tell him about Stan!

.

A few more weeks his country claims him, then he will be demobilized and come sailing back to me.

.

I have telegraphed father to come on at once. I want to tell him the whole story before I break

the news to Stan. Father will help me to do what is necessary. Poor Stan! I have treated him abominably and the sooner he is rid of me the better. Some other woman can make him happy. As for me—in my heart I am already the wife of Pierre!

A week later.

When I came home from work to-night I found—father. Although I was expecting him and wanted him, it seems incredible that he is actually here. So many things have happened since I said good-by to him, that night of my elopement with Stan.

I went to him with a rush of emotion and kissed him impetuously; but almost immediately felt that old instinctive barrier creeping between us. I could not bring myself to tell him . . . what *must* be told. I asked about mother and learned that she has been ill for months. In her usual thoughtful, unselfish way she had kept this back in her letters, and I felt like a guilty thing. Remorse filled my heart and I burst into tears. Father was dear and kind. He tried to comfort me, and put aside all his old authoritative ways. When I asked him to wait until to-morrow before our serious talk he agreed tenderly.

“I’ll come and take you to luncheon,” he said,

then he went on to tell me that he and mother were proud of the success I had had in my work. My heart was full of gratitude. What wonderful friends we might have been all these years, if we could only have been a little more human and natural with one another!

Later.

I have thought over the whole situation. I cannot give up Pierre. There is something in the eyes of older people, an elusive expression that urges me to gather quickly all the beauty and happiness life puts within my reach. I have caught that look again and again of late—in the eyes of rich old women riding in luxurious motors, in the eyes of tired mothers hanging to straps in the subway, in the eyes of street-sweepers, office workers, school teachers . . . A discouraged baffled look, as if life had evaded them, its silver stream sweeping far afield offering only a tantalizing glimpse of what might have been theirs. I saw that look to-night in father's eyes!

No, I *cannot* give up Pierre. Nothing can make me give him up.

Tuesday.

Father and I had luncheon together and at last

I told him everything, little by little. It was the hardest thing I ever did. As he listened my heart ached for him. He did not storm at me, or reproach me, he seemed to respect my sincerity and to understand what has happened; but he was sad—disappointed, helpless before this new disaster that I was contemplating—*divorce!*

He promised to help me, however, to stand by me, to do all that he could—he would go over the whole situation with Stanley as soon as he arrived.

“Stanley?” I cried. “He isn’t coming, is he? I wired you I didn’t want him to come.”

“I know, dear, I persuaded him not to, after a lot of argument,” answered Father; “but he must have changed his mind. There was a telegram from him at the hotel. Here!”

He handed me this curt, ominous message:

“Am leaving to-night. Have followed your advice long enough. Propose to manage this affair myself. Stanley.”

CHAPTER III

STANLEY ASSERTS HIMSELF

IN the flow of everyday happenings Stanley Creighton was susceptible to doubts and waverings like other men and, being modest about himself, he knew what it was to fall into fits of discouragement when he was conscious of his own inferiorities, his rough ways, his lack of glib adjustability; and became uncertain as to the course that he ought to pursue. At such times he was easily influenced by others whom he loved and respected, as he had been influenced by Patricia and by her father; but let disaster come or some sudden peril that forced him to act swiftly and at once he was a different man. He was like an experienced navigator lounging on the deck of a ship until the storm breaks, whereupon in a twinkling he asserts himself, brushing aside incompetents, and takes command. Stanley had now asserted himself.

As his train rushed along he thought back through the months to that miserable time when

Patricia had left him. After the immediate hurt to his pride had calmed a little his one thought had been to rush after his wife and get her back at any cost. He would yield to her demands, all of them, he would do anything to conciliate her. He could not endure life without her.

But he had endured it—after listening to her father's arguments. Lydig assured him that to pursue Patsy against her will and insist upon his rights as a husband would only make matters worse. He would lose her irretrievably. The only way to make Patricia realize her mistake was to let her have her own way.

No one but the forsaken husband knew the bitterness of his struggle with himself, but he finally yielded and the weary months had passed. He had written Patricia two pleading letters, but they were returned unopened, with these words scrawled across one of them: "*Don't, please, Stan!*"

Now, however, everything was changed. He had tried the experiment of patience and it had failed. Patsy's telegram indicated that something had gone wrong: "Father dear, please come to New York as soon as convenient. Am not ill, but must see you. Beg you not to let Stanley come yet."

What was the meaning of this? What *could*

be the meaning? Why did she not wish him to come? And what was the significance of that word *yet*? The father had warned Stanley against following his cave-man impulses. Rot! He ought to have followed them long ago. After all she was his wife.

"A woman is merciless when she does not love," Lydig had said to him one day, and Stanley had not disputed this at the time. Now he would have replied that a woman is often a little fool who doesn't know whether she loves or not. The right man can *show* her. Well, he would take this thing into his own hands and perhaps it wasn't too late.

So it befell that four days later Stanley's voice thrilled to Patricia over the telephone: "Hello! This is Stan. Yes, I've seen your father—we've had a little talk. Yes, I know about that—everything. Could you come and take luncheon with me at the Brevoort? To-day? Yes, I'd rather make it down-town, if you don't mind."

Here was the first faint clash of wills, and Patricia yielded. She would have preferred an uptown meeting place, one of those feminine, charmingly decorated tea-rooms, where she felt more on her ground, but for some reason she did not insist. Nor did she ask him to call for her,

as she had hoped he would, saying (when he did not suggest this) that she could come down quite conveniently in a Fifth Avenue bus.

Their meeting was disconcertingly direct, quite friendly, but unsentimental. Stanley made no move to kiss her, as she had supposed he would after so long a separation. In a way she was relieved at this, for why should a man kiss a woman who is trying to divorce him? Still he might have shown that he would have *liked* to kiss her. And at least he might have paid her some little compliment on her looks—her new hat and dress that she had bought with her own money. She noticed that he looked pale, a trifle thinner, with a spiritual something in his eyes. He was different in a way—good-natured, gentle, but somehow vaguely formidable. And he was better dressed—with more care and quieter taste—than she had ever seen him. A splendidly built fellow with keen, heavily fringed gray eyes whom all the women in the room noticed. Had he really ceased caring for her? Or was it merely an assumed coldness?

Stanley wasted no time in polite generalities. had no questions to ask about her work or her self-supporting experiences in New York, did not even flatter her by suggestions of jealousy—nothing of the sort. On the contrary his air was that

of a man absolutely sure of himself and of his mastery of the situation.

"Now, Pat, suppose we lay our cards on the table," he began, as soon as he had given the order. "Your father tells me you have met a Frenchman here and fallen in love with him? Is that so?"

His whole manner irritated her. What was the need for this abruptness? How lacking he was in delicacy!

"Yes," she answered, coldly.

"You want a divorce from me? You propose to marry this Captain Boissard?"

"Yes."

"As I understand it he has no money? No regular business or position? Have you thought about that?"

"That doesn't worry me. He's a very talented man, Stanley. He will make his way."

"How? How old is he? If I'm going to give you up I must know something about the man I'm giving you to."

"He's thirty years old."

Creighton shook his head disapprovingly. "It's bad form to knock a rival, but I'll just call your attention to this, Pat, as a matter of cold fact, that if a man hasn't amounted to something by the time he's thirty, the chances are he'll never

amount to anything. Hasn't Captain Boissard any income at all—any sure income?"

"He has his pay from the Government and—" she flushed, "a little from his family."

"I happen to know what the pay of a French captain is and—well, it's no disgrace to be poor, but—say he has his two or three thousand dollars a year—he hasn't more than that, has he?"

"Perhaps not. I don't know. I don't care. This isn't a question of money. Love doesn't depend upon money."

"No, of course not. You really love him, Pat? There's no mistake about it this time?" His tone was gentler now.

"There's no mistake," she answered with a pathetic, pleading look that cut to his heart. "I—I love him, Stan."

"You poor foolish little girl! You don't know what love is. First you thought you loved me—you must have thought so or you wouldn't have run away from home with me. Now you're sure you love this Frenchman. I don't doubt that you think you do, you may love the man you think he is."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that we're none of us what we seem to be. And the opinion we have of other people

is wrong—half the time. For instance, you've got a certain idea about me, but it's not the right idea. I'm not the man you think I am—not a bit of it. You'll find that out. You think I stand in awe of you and your father because you've had more advantages than I have. Well, I don't. I don't give a hang for all the culture and nice ways that you consider so important. I know something more important than culture, a whole lot more important."

"What is that?"

"Never mind. Just watch me. I'll show you a few things—and your father too. You don't either of you know your own minds. Well, I do, thank God! I've let you two decide for me long enough. I know exactly what I want and I'm going after it—straight after it." His eyes had become hard, dominating.

"You mean . . ."

"Yes, you—you're my wife."

"I tell you I love another man. I love him with all my heart and soul."

"Do you love him enough to be his mistress?"

Patricia drew back white with anger.

"What an abominable—outrageous—"

"I'm sorry for you, if you don't," Creighton went on with cutting directness. "I know what

I'm talking about. I've only been here twenty-four hours, but I've found out enough in that time to make me reasonably sure . . ."

"What have you found out?"

"This man is a Catholic."

"Naturally, most Frenchmen are."

"Devout—you understand?"

"Well?"

"He wouldn't marry a divorced woman. He couldn't, or he thinks he couldn't."

"How do you know what Captain Boissard thinks?"

"You mean to say you think he will marry you? You are counting on that? You think he will be big enough to jeopardize the welfare of his precious French soul for your sake? Do you?"

She was crying now—softly, dabbing a handkerchief to her eyes.

"Listen, Pat! I'm not a brute. If I thought Boissard was a fine man who would make you happy—if I thought he was worthy of you—if I believed that you knew the kind of fellow he is and loved him in spite of that—"

"I won't listen to you. What do you know against Captain Boissard, except that he's a Catholic? Which is better than being a free-thinker."

"Free-thinker? I'm going to be a straight thinker. Not a mushy sentimentalist. If Bois-

sard was really a fine man, I'd step aside. I'd have to. I want you to be happy. But, by God, you won't be happy with him. He won't marry you."

"He will. He has asked me to marry him a dozen times. He asked me only yesterday."

"Tell him you've got a husband living and see if he asks you again."

"He will."

"He won't."

"And if he does? Stanley?"

Her voice was pleading, conciliatory as she came a step nearer to her husband.

Stanley turned away and stood pondering this with a heavy frown.

"If Boissard offers to marry you after he knows the truth, and if you still want to marry him, you shall have a divorce."

CHAPTER IV

PATRICIA TELLS PIERRE THE TRUTH

(*Written by Patricia*)

Monday.

I HAVE seen Stan. Useless to record our interview. It was hard, tearing. I could have wept for him. He is utterly masculine. Determined. How pitiful that we all try to hold on to what we have had and loved! Nothing is lasting, no matter how hard we try to make it so. Everything is swept away from us by the current of life.

I was honest with him at least, but then I *had* to be. No shadow of an evasion is possible with him. His eyes command, his mind and will are like flint. He resolutely faces realities. Had he been in the place of Pierre he would soon have known that I was not a widow. I have a feeling that even Pierre must have his suspicions, but feared to ask a question that might spoil his dream. We have both been cowards.

Stan's ultimatum was characteristic; "Catholics



Stan

do not marry divorced women. Tell him you *are* a divorced woman and then, if he still asks you to be his wife, I will give you a divorce. But he won't marry you."

Imagine! He *dared* to say that!

Thursday.

Pierre's letters have been a comfort, for the most part chatty, full of clever pen-pictures of places and people, tender and promising, though in one he awoke a fear in my mind. He referred to our kneeling together in the little French church.

"That to me was the apex of happiness, for it meant that God himself had joined our souls for good. How I should like to have a long, long talk with you on that, and show you how an 'inherited faith,' as you called it, can become one's own property; how the beauty of Christ ages and the Middle Ages can be also the beauty of modern times and modern people; how the noble roots of an old unchanged form of worship can bloom into ever-changing flowers of love and self-sacrifice."

And he added these consoling words: "You are going to give me the happiest days of my life. I pray God that I may not be unworthy . . ."

.

It is no use to worry. I am sure of Pierre. He can *translate* his love of the ideal, and accept a creed that is kinder to poor humans, who inevitably make mistakes at one time or another . . .

Tuesday.

I'm thankful for my work. My days at the office are absorbing. They demand all my attention. To-day I took father into my domain (I have a private room of my own now, if you please) and he was properly impressed.

"Fine, fine!" he complimented me. "You had the talent, I always said so, only your will did not lead it in the right direction. If you want to keep this position, Pat, if it means happiness to you, I'm sure Stan will not object."

I turned to him in surprise.

"But, Father, I've told you about Pierre. That's not an idle fancy. It's the truth. I love him. I'm going to marry him. Stan will be happier without me. He is strong, self-reliant. He doesn't need me. Pierre does."

.
Four more days until Pierre's boat is due!

Thursday.

I went to dinner this evening with three of the

girls I have met through my work. They have a charming little apartment in the Village—all fresh chintz and the furniture moved about so that even old wrecks of things look comfy. They are great girls, all up and coming, not afraid of work. Over cigarettes and coffee we discussed plays of the season, music, and ideas for stories. One of them is not concerned with men, the others hobnob in friendly, casual fashion with several. Is that because they have not met the *one* man who can shatter their nice, safe equilibrium? I, too, was once cool and calm with my fingers on my pulse.

.

I shall see Pierre—*to-morrow night!*

Friday.

Here I sit writing, waiting for Pierre. Already I have heard his voice over the telephone. I'm absurdly excited. I must be calm. There is no dodging the issue to-night. I have promised Stan to tell Pierre that I am *a married woman!* Is it possible Pierre will turn from me? No, he could not. Our love has a deep spiritual basis.

Pierre's first letter, written at sea, spoke of our separation as the *pierre de touche*. He said absence is for the affections what a great storm

is for trees in a forest, some it wrenches up brutally, others it fortifies in deeper and stronger rootage! . . .

In a few minutes the telephone will ring. Its shrill call will set my heart beating to this new swift rhythm of happiness. I shall put on my hat, the soft velour I bought this afternoon—its intense blue coaxes out the color of my eyes. And *he* will like me in this gown—two weeks' salary went into it—a simple wine-colored velvet cut with medium low square neck and elbow sleeves edged with dark fur . . . I'll be hurrying into my big coat, fastening my furs snugly at the throat so that their soft, long-haired loveliness brushes up becomingly about my face. Then a dash of perfume on the tips of my ears, across my lips, through my hair . . . The telephone! . . . The telephone! . . .

Later.

I unbarred my prejudice and let Pierre come up to my room, as all the girls in the house do with their suitors. I could not greet him with a simple hand-shake in the hall, and kisses in taxis always seem furtive, stolen. I want to get away from that, to clear up all deception and be once more on speaking terms with my best self.

I had imagined our meeting dozens of times,

acted it over and over in my mind in a dozen different ways and places. But now . . . I opened the door and let my beloved enter my little square room with its dark painted furniture and glowing chintz. I closed the door and slipped quietly into his outstretched arms.

"No," I begged, "please, please, Pierre!" I murmured against his too vehement kisses. "I must talk to you, I have a thousand things to say."

His faint frown troubled me as I studied his face. He was thinner. He looked different . . . Why, of course, his uniform! He no longer wore his uniform. Some of his magnificence had gone with the blue and red and gold, but that did not matter. I was glad, for the change gave him more wholly to me, drew him away from the eyes of a curious world.

So—we sidetracked again, dodged the main issue, and, like two truant children, joyed in our dinner, our rush out along the Drive beside the cold, gray Hudson with its fringe of dark bare trees.

We found a table near the huge open fire-place at our Inn. There were only half-a-dozen couples dancing and, as I knew I could not take Pierre to my room after ten o'clock (rules of the house) I decided to make the plunge now.

"Pierre," I said suddenly, leaning across the table to him, "I have something to tell you. I—I have held something back." His quick questioning eyes clutched my heart. "You see . . . I am not yet free . . . but I will be soon. My husband has promised me that I am to be free."

"Your husband!"

Again fear gripped me for his face went white, then set into hard lines.

"You did not ask me—about that," I stammered, realizing that I was making a mess of things. "I thought—I was almost *sure* you guessed . . ."

"You knew I was a Catholic," he replied. "You knew a divorced woman could mean nothing to me."

His eyes were cold, his tone irrevocable. If we were only alone where I could have a fair chance. That maddening foxtrot! How could I talk against it!

"Oh! let's go," I burst out. "I can't stand this—anywhere out of this bedlam."

"Why?" he asked wearily. "It's no use. You've said all there is to say. You are a married woman. I am a Catholic. I cannot marry a divorcée. You *must* have realized that. You know what my religion means to me."

At this my anger blazed.

"You half-knew about Stan all along. You *could* have known, but you feared to face the truth. You *did*."

"Well, yes," he admitted slowly, "I did sense that things were not quite r-right . . . but . . ."

"Why didn't you ask Margot?" I persisted. "Why did you avoid her? For the same reason I avoided her. Pierre . . . don't, *don't* look at me like that . . . I'll disgrace myself, break down. Please take me away . . ."

He called the waiter then, settled with him and helped me into my coat. Once in the car he softened a little, but he made no move toward me.

"It is no use," he said gently. "Oh, please don't cry . . . It cannot be . . . but then, we have known some happiness. Is it not so? It was ver-ry sweet while it lasted. I will remember it . . . always."

I began to sob stormily.

"You think yourself religious. You believe God is on your side. You would save your own soul and let mine go!" I reached out to him pleadingly, touching his arm. "Surely that is not Christ-like, Pierre. Isn't your first duty to me? You have awakened the very best in me. If you

leave me now, you will kill my belief in everything, man, God—everything.”

We were riding on . . . on, and he remained silent. Was he made of stone? Had he been playing upon my sensibilities all along? Was it all false, a lie? What a weak, wavering love his must be to be put aside for a creed!

Pierre's arms were about me. He was saying: “Pat-ricia . . . my darling . . . I thought it would all be so sweet. But, you see, I cannot go against my family, my church, my God. I cannot. I love you . . . but I cannot do that . . .”

“*Your* God, *your* soul, *your* family!” I cried bitterly. “Selfish! Selfish! I fell into passionate weeping, fighting Pierre off when he bent near to comfort me, then suddenly throwing my arms about his neck, kissing him recklessly . . .

· · · · ·
He has gone.

· · · · ·
I came up to my empty room and threw myself dressed on my couch. The ache at my heart was a physical thing with sharp, agonizing stabs. I could not think. I felt no mental anguish.

· · · · ·
It is not good-by. I am sure of that. He thinks he will stay away; but he cannot. There

are forces in life too powerful to be overcome or resisted.

.
I was too ill to go to the office this morning, but I shall go to-morrow morning. Pierre will come back to me. If not . . .

CHAPTER V

DESPAIR

(Written by Patricia)

Saturday.

THREE days have dragged by. No word from Pierre. I have performed my task at the office like an automaton. One of the girls asked if I were ill, and the manager offered to take some work off my shoulders.

How short or how long Time is, according to circumstances. I am torn between the desire to rush here and there in a mad search for forgetfulness, and the insistent demand to stay closely in my room so that I may not miss a telephone message. My whole being strains, waiting for the call. It comes and I rush to it, faint with anticipation. Over the wire comes a voice, any voice, except the one I want. And disappointment breaks over me.

Fate is malicious. I inevitably meet people I have laboriously sought to avoid. It was Janet to-day. She picked me up in her motor, blithe,

chatty as usual, content with life and her round of pleasures and duties. There was no getting out of dropping in at her home for tea; I could not afford to be persistently evasive and odd.

A few months back I would have been unstirred by my visit to that charming apartment. Now bitterness flooded me. It was the tranquil fireside that Pierre and I had dreamed of. Why should the Janets of the world sit lapped in happiness and content, as life's best gifts fall into their hands without effort, without intense longings even? But far back in my mind I knew that the Janets are not highly selective, nor exacting of Fate. Therefore Life yields them neither great joy nor great pain—merely a cheerful content. They are tabbies basking in the sun.

A crisply starched nurse brought in that adorable baby and, as I held out my arms, he eyed me, gravely judging, then gave a leap and with a gurgle nestled to me.

Followed half an hour of pleasant chatter while the firelight played over the old blue of the porcelain, gleamed on the silver, leaped from the polished mahogany of the tea table, drawing the room's out-of-the-way corners intimately closer. It was all cheery and comfortable—the spicy smell of cinnamon toast, the competent movements of an immaculate maid, and the low, coo-

ing laugh of that sturdy, ten months old boy!

I talked of my work and of father's visit, with an elusive mention of Stan, meant to give an impression that perhaps . . . well, perhaps . . . Yes, Janet got it. She beamed in motherly fashion, patted my hand and kissed me as I rose, my heart swelling and aching until I felt at last the tears *could* come.

I hurried home. No word. I searched through my mail box, irately questioned the darky at the switchboard, crawled miserably up to my room, threw myself quiet and motionless on my couch, my heart a dead weight, my ears still straining for the telephone.

Monday.

He cannot leave me in silence much longer. Perhaps he will write. Perhaps. After awhile.

Thursday.

No word.

The days break into sunshine that dies out like the hope in my heart.

Friday.

He is cold, hard, selfish—Pierre. There is no such thing as justice in the world. Where is the

God of the trenches, the Great Unseen Force of magnificently impartial Love?

Saturday afternoon.

No mail in my box, but when I came to my room, listless and down-hearted, I discovered a box tied to the door knob. A florist's box!

Lilies—lilies-of-the-valley! Their subtle perfume reached me as I caught the handwriting on an envelope. I put my face down against the small appealing white flowers, and for the first time since Pierre's leave-taking—tears!

I joyed in the flowers for a moment, went humming into the bathroom for water and collided with a kimono-ed girl-neighbor who told me she had taken the box in from the florist's boy. I arranged the lilies in a low heliotrope bowl, thinking of the message that awaited me, then, with trembling fingers broke the seal.

"Chérie:

"This is good-by. I have lived with tortured mind and heart these days and nights, have fought against causing you the pain that I have suffered. But, I cannot see you again. There is no trusting myself. Near you, with your dear voice in my ears, the perfume of you, the touch of your hands. . . . No, I would be too weak. You can tell yourself that the heart of *votre ami* will re-

main forever true. You alone, bien chère, have reached my soul. Adieu! In spite of separation and silence, you will keep always the faithful love of—

“PIERRE.”

Sunday.

I have tried to go back over the horror of last night and recall events as they happened. It was just after Pierre's letter that the telephone began its persistent ringing. I did not answer it. Then the doorbell rang. Some one was knocking. Voices in the hall.

“Yes, I am sure she is in.” Another knock, then the knob turned, the door opened slowly, and light from the hall streamed in.

“Patricia—Pat!”

Some one was stumbling over a chair, then the electric light came blindingly. I crouched back in a corner among my pillows blinking angrily—at Margot!

“What do you want?” I asked sullenly. “Go away. Oh, I am ill—ill—go away.”

She turned and spoke cheerfully to some one in the hall.

“It's all right. She's here, just resting—a headache.” She came back to the couch and sat down by me.

"You take things too seriously, Pat. Whatever has happened, it's not worth tearing your soul up by the roots like this. Particularly . . . if it's a man. No man in the world is worth agonizing over—selfish beasts!"

"Why did you come?" I cried. "Pierre . . . ?"

"He rang me up to say 'good-by.' He's sailing soon. Says he's too busy to see any one." Her voice ironically stressed the *busy*.

"I suppose he told you," I began, scanning her face.

"Nothing . . . but I'm not a fool. Don't you think I've known that you two were playing about together?"

As she said this a fierce, cruel look leaped into her eyes. A line deepened about her mouth. She looked ugly! A second later this was gone, and Margot had resumed her usual, half-humorous, half-cynical expression, a tolerant acceptance of life in any of its varied forms.

"What difference does that make to you?"

"You mean that I'm not a custodian of—
—morals!"

She laughed flippantly, drew her light satin slippers onto the couch, embraced her knees with her arms, and abstractedly circled one slim, silken ankle with her fingers. She was an arresting figure in her daringly cut apricot silk even-

ing gown, the masses of her dark hair piled high in an amazing but simple coiffure. "Right you are, my dear, but after all you're my friend—so is Pierre." When she turned to me again her eyes were wonderfully softened. "I knew Pierre in France when I was so high. We used to walk about the sedate paths of his father's fine old garden. I was a youngster in short skirts with hair flying, and this fine young man in his trim Lycée uniform was my hero. That was my one real love affair. When I was eighteen and he twenty-seven he would not look at me—that is, not as I wished him to. He was always grave and aloof. His family hoped he would go into the church . . ."

"Then he really *is* religious? . . .

Margot shrugged.

"Come, dearie! What's the use of being serious? Get into something pretty. We've a little party on to-night and you're going—oh, yes, you are. Look at me, Pat!" She leaned over me with a fierce intentness that made me shrink away from her. "There's no use thinking of Pierre *seriously*. You're married and he's a rabid Catholic; moreover, his family would disinherit him, and how could *he* make a living? You'd have to furnish a jolly big dot, that's certain, and

if you should sway him . . . in another way . . . (you might, he's emotional and rather weak) if you did, if you dared remove that precious little halo of yours, he would soon hate you, and himself, too, but chiefly you. He's like other men in that. Besides," again that evil light in her eyes and the set look about her lips, but they passed quickly, "I want you with me—to-night. It isn't good for you to be alone."

Why I went I do not know, but I did. Nothing seemed of much consequence. I might as well dance as cry. Why not? I tried to coax back the old reckless Patricia; I made my lips into a scarlet bow across my pale face, all the more challenging because I wore a simple white gown. I frizzed out my hair audaciously.

"Now you'll do, my dear, but get a vivid coat," commented Margot as she surveyed me. "Haven't one? Well, I have. We'll go to my apartment first anyway for cocktails."

Half a dozen men, including Don Hammond, who was dispensing drinks, had already gathered in the apartment when we entered. Margot's parties were always made up chiefly of men. She burst into the room breezily.

"Hello, boys! Is Don keeping you happy?"

By the time the introductions were over I was

sorry I had come. I sank down on the davenport before a large, old-fashioned fireplace where logs were snapping and glowing, hating all these bowing men about me. Sleek and well-groomed as they were in their evening dress, they betrayed their real selves in suggestive stories, thinly veiled with fake decency. Marriage had certainly not done much for Margot, except to coarsen her unspeakably.

I had never attended one of her "parties," although she and I had had afternoon tea in her apartment several times. It was a charming place—by fire and candlelight—Chinese blue and soft, melting ochers. I spoke of the room's restfulness to the florid-faced man who had drawn up a chair and thrust his face too near to mine. His answers were so confused and vague that I laughed and he, misunderstanding, jerked his chair closer, pressing against my knees. Some one was thumping out a foxtrot, while Margot and a slim, blond youth, clasped close, danced spasmodically. I eluded the florid-faced person and, going over to Don Hammond, hastily drank his proffered gin fizz, making a wry face. Gin has always been medicine to me, but its effects were what I needed now. I'd get through somehow, I kept telling myself, but it was sickening, all of it. I saw Margot kiss the slim, dancing

youth behind the door, and blow a little salute at Don's back.

I was glad when, wrapt in a scarlet velvet, fur-trimmed coat of Margot's, I went with the others to a glaring, fashionable restaurant where we met the rest of the party, and flocked to our waiting table—there it was banked with American beauty roses.

Such agonizing hours of hilarity! I kept telling myself that nothing made any difference. Nothing! And I drained my teacup of contraband cocktails with hectic eagerness. How idiotic it all was, the blatant talk of the men, the giggling coquetry of the women, the feverish endeavor of every one to appear gay, devilishly gay! I was tired, sick, too, of fighting off the florid one's more and more insistent and insinuating attentions. What sentimental rot to talk of life as a shining river! It was full of slimy, unlovely things, muddled, choked with the dregs of our hopes.

I reached the point where I could not stand it any longer, and, with a whispered excuse to Margot, I slipped away to the dressing-room, then on down the stairs out into the sharp winter night. I walked rapidly, not realizing that I had left my little gold coin-purse in my own coat pocket and that I was penniless. The elevated roared over-

head. Sixth Avenue! I did not care where I went or what happened to me. Why not? . . . Why not? . . .

I caught curious looks directed at me. Once I started nervously, imagining that a man was following me. I did not know where I was going. I did not care. I only wanted to get away from everything, to get away from the thought beating at my weary brain.

I walked on, crossed the Avenue, and passed along East Fifty-eighth Street, which was practically deserted. An occasional taxi-driver pressed close to the curb to urge "Taxi, miss?"

Sifting into my mind came a thought that pulled me up sharply. I stood still and turned it over in my mind. Why not? There was nothing ahead for me anyway. I might as well yield to this now. I turned down two blocks and sought East Fifty-sixth Street. My eye ran over the individual numbers. I passed from house to house, then paused before a creamy-colored front. Its windows were discreet with green shutters, there was a gleaming brass knocker on the door, and above it the number that I sought, standing out distinctly.

Fear, linked with all my instinctive reserve, rose to fight my wild intention. Pride looked at me with outraged eyes. But an even stronger

impulse warred against all of these and led me through the door, down the wide empty hallway to the drowsing elevator boy. He blinked at me solemnly, disinterestedly, stepping aside that I might enter his cage. Then to my stammered question he yarned indifferently:

“Capt’n Boissard? No’um. He ain’t come in yet. No’um.”

The actual question and answer brought me to my senses. Crimsoning, I rushed out, colliding at the door with a man who was hurrying in. I avoided looking at him, drawing the deep fur collar of my cloak jealously about my face, and murmuring an apology. But the man stepped squarely in front of me, whereupon I started indignantly, then looked up into the eyes of Stan!

CHAPTER VI

PATRICIA UNBURDENS HER SOUL

ONE o'clock in the morning!

Never would Patricia forget the expression in Stan's eyes as he stood looking down at her, while she hugged her gorgeous cloak and the tatters of her pride about her. On the threshold of Pierre's apartment! Anger burned in his eyes like a flame; but instinctively she realized that it was directed past her, not at her. His bewilderment, hurt pride, unbelief, furious resentment for himself and for her—all these surging emotions that she sensed in him were mastered by tenderness, a supreme tenderness that enveloped her and lulled her fears as a child is soothed to sleep by its mother.

"Come on, Patsy," he spoke in a quiet, controlled voice. "There's a taxi passing, we can get it, if we hustle . . ." He took her arm and hurried her along, hailing the driver. Their feet beat upon the pavement, her high heels clicking sharp staccatos to his even, assured tread.

"Now then, relax—and rest," he commanded, as they settled themselves in the car. To the chauffeur he said, "Out the Drive, yes, right along until I tell you to stop—understand?"

She huddled obediently in a corner and he stretched himself out comfortably, elaborately casual, in an endeavor to put her at her ease. But when he spoke again his words exploded:

"Look here, Pat. What I'd like to do, what I planned to do was to beat up that sanctified, saint-posing French weakling, then take you home with me, whether you liked it or not. I figured that I'd played the patient, outraged husband long enough. It was all right for you to go to work. I've been proud of your pluck and your success, yes, I have, but a love-affair on the side was one too many for me. You see I was cock-sure I'd win out in the long run, that deep down in your heart you cared a darn sight more about me than you knew, and that the simple fundamental facts which keep life clean and sweet would appeal to you when you woke up." He stopped and fumbled for his old friend, pipe, went through the mechanics of filling it, then awkwardly apologized and rammed it back into his pocket in spite of her protest. He continued:

"Well, figuring the way I do now," he continued, "I see I was all wrong. I've messed

things up generally. It was no use trying to break you to my way of thinking. I was a fool to try. I would only break your spirit. I guess I don't know much about women.

"I went to your father because the roots of his affection for you are bedded as deeply as mine; besides he has known you longer, but he wasn't any wiser than I.

"You know that letter you wrote to me, Pat? I've done some studying over it. It's this *glint of wings* you spoke of that has played the devil with our happiness. I'm not blaming you. Heavens, no, child! It's a natural aspiration toward the ideal. We all reach and strain for something—money, business success, social success, artistic achievement. That's why I wanted to quit the movies and do a big piece of real writing that would satisfy *me*, the real me, and, poor dub that I was!—make you proud of me." For the first time a note of bitterness crept into his voice. She tried to speak, but he interrupted:

"No, wait a moment, Pat. I've got to say my little say right Now. It's been bottled up for months. Where was I? Oh! yes, the glint of wings in a far-off sky. Well, it's plain that what this glint of wings meant to you, in spite of kidding yourself about your liberty and your art and your

this and that that you wanted or thought you wanted—it's plain that it really meant *love!*"

They turned a corner sharply and the girl lurched forward; a street light shone in across Stan's face, white, intent, his eyes centered on space. Abruptly he turned to her and gripped one wrist until she winced.

"Pat, you poor little kid! You love him all right. There's nothing more to say. He's not worthy of you, not strong enough, but you love him. I've trailed you all night. I was in the café and watched your pitiful attempts to be one with that damned vulgar crowd, and yet keep your fine little head above water. I followed you stumbling about the streets, not knowing, not caring where you went or what happened to you. And then in despair you turned to him! There must be *something* about him to bring you—proud, willful—humbly to his door! . . . Wait . . . just this and I'm through." He moved closer to her, eyes tender, voice shaken.

"Patsy, darling, do you think for one minute I'd be such a selfish brute as to try to hold you against a love like that? Do you think I'd prison you with me when your happiness is with some one else? Not by a long shot. You want him. You shall have him. Now tell me what's the

matter. I'll do anything to help you. That's the only way my love can speak. I'm a farce at fine words and fine ways. Then I'll fade away—take the first train for California, Nevada, any old place that means a quick divorce and—another chance for you. Go on, dear."

Patricia spoke, beginning haltingly, torn with distress. In each one of us there is a need to unburden, to word our misdeeds, our remorse, our despair. The Catholic fathers understood the human heart when they instituted the confessional; but it should be voluntary, not compulsory. How many lives it has saved from ship-wreck! How many minds it has kept sane!

And, presently, under the encouragement of his sympathy, Patricia told Stan everything without reservation, all the intensity of joy and pain that she had been through.

"So you see," she concluded, "there's no good in divorce, no good in anything. Oh, Stan, I'm tired, tired! What's the matter with me? I'm not really bad. I'm not even selfish at bed rock—I know it. I could have slaved, been poor, endured anything—with Pierre. I'm no good at compromises. And I've spoiled your life. If you could only love some one else, Stan. I tell you everything is cruel, malicious."

Stan interrupted gravely:

"You're dead wrong, Pat, you're nervous—overwrought. Sense of proportion out of joint. Sense of humor completely swamped! You're going right home to bed now and sleep for a dozen hours." He rapped on the window, gave the driver Patricia's address, then slipped his arm around her in brotherly fashion. "Now then, kiddie, listen to me. You're borrowing tragedy. Do you think that a man who loves a woman as this chap loves you is going to give her up for a detail in creed? Do you think that? Not for a minute! What if he is a Catholic? He's a man, too. Mark my words, he'll come back. He'll tell you he can't live without you. You may both be doing penance the rest of your lives in some way he'll conceive of to save your souls; but he'll come back, *I know he will.*"

Patricia would have been startled had she seen the savage thrust of his jaw as he spoke! And his arms closed spasmodically about her shoulders. "Oh! Patsy," he choked. "He'd better be good to you, or I'll—"

They rode on silently. A slow sure peace stole into her heart. Stan—so strong and confident! He must know of what he spoke. Men did know things like that about each other. How grateful she was! How wonderful to be able to rely on such a love! Her head nodded forward.

"That's right, honey . . . that's right, go to sleep . . ." Stan's voice sounded far away.

Through her dreams that night this thought carried:

"Pierre will come back to me."

CHAPTER VII

STANLEY CALLS ON PIERRE

To Stan Creighton whose religious ideas as a child had been formed in the rather vague Protestant atmosphere of an American small town (his people were Methodists), and whose maturer views had worked themselves out on broad, not to say free-thinking lines, there was something preposterous in the notion that a really fine man would allow any restraint of creed or dogma to come between himself and the woman of his choice. He could understand disagreements on religious subjects, even heated ones, but he would as soon have thought of allowing the course of his true love to be turned aside by some political or scientific argument as by anything that any preacher or religious teacher could say or write.

Not so Pierre whose sincerity in these scruples of conscience was soon made apparent in a meeting between the two men at the Frenchman's apartment where Stanley called.

"I see," said Creighton when they had passed

from brief and embarrassing preliminaries to the subject that filled their thoughts. "You love her, but you don't love her enough."

Boissard answered with simple and straightforward convincingness: "Monsieur, I beg you to believe that this is the most terrible happening of my life. I love Patricia. My whole soul yearns for her. I would rather die than do her any wrong. But I must point out to you that the situation in which we find ourselves was not created by me. Until a few days ago I never dreamed that Patricia was a married woman. I loved her honorably. I asked her to marry me honorably. It was only when I discovered the tragic truth that I saw what a gulf lay between us—an impassable gulf. Then, in that first unhappy hour, I told her marriage was impossible between us. I showed her why."

"And you sent her away from you—said you would never see her again?"

"*Mais certainement!* To see her again meant marriage or—or sin. I had to send her away. What would you have done in my place, monsieur?"

"I would have married her."

"Not if that meant disgrace to your beloved family."

"Yes."

"Not if it meant the betrayal of your sacred faith, the perdition of your immortal soul. No, monsieur! I beg you to believe that in France we Catholics take our religion seriously."

Stan noted the illumined, almost inspired look in the young soldier's eyes, and there began to form in his heart a vague feeling that perhaps, after all, this Frenchman was a fine man listening to the voice of his conscience, resolved to do right at all costs. If that were true, then Boissard was not unworthy of Patricia.

Stan was no longer listening, although he seemed to listen. He was thinking intently, groping towards a decision of unbelievable difficulty. If Boissard really believed that to marry a divorced woman was a deadly sin that would blight and destroy his own soul and make him therefore incapable of giving her happiness, then he was right in standing by his conviction. There are some things that a *man* will never do, let the consequences be what they may; he will not trample on the flag of his country, he will not insult his mother's memory, he will not defile the sanctuary of his soul.

"You said just now that you love Patricia?"

"Love her? I would die for her ver-ry gladly."

Die for her! Stanley crossed his long legs, threw back his shock of hair and squinted at the

Frenchman through half-shut eyes very much as he would have sized up an adversary in a poker game.

"I guess he's on the level," mused Creighton, and the fact is, if the call had come at that moment, Captain Boissard would have stepped forth unflinching to any sacrifice.

With this conviction there came to Stanley, like a flash in the darkness, a new idea as to what he must do now. If this man was worthy of Patricia and loved her as she loved him, why—they must come together—no question about it. They must come together in the right way—in wedlock. They *would* come together anyhow, as things were going. Stan knew enough about men and women to be sure of this. Nothing could keep them apart, not vows or threats, not oceans or continents—they would come together. And he, Stanley, stood between their coming together honorably. So it was up to him to—Hm!—he crossed his legs awkwardly again and thought of that rotten day in the Argonne woods when the Germans were smashing ahead and had almost cut off an American division that had lost its way. The order had come for a quick retreat with calls for machine-gunners who would remain behind to delay the enemy—a bad piece of business. Stan was afraid all right, but he volunteered—that

was for his flag. Well, this would be for Patricia.

Now suddenly with a rattle of the elevator door came the crisis. There was a knock, and Pierre answered it, facing a tall, round-shouldered messenger boy who wearily tendered a pale blue envelope along with his book. Stan's eyes idly followed his companion's back, and presently he became aware of an embarrassing situation there at the door. Something unusual was happening.

"Sign there, mister," said the boy, and Boissard signed in nervous haste, then tipped the messenger over-generously and stood waiting for him to go. But the messenger did not move.

"The lady said I was to get her bag."

Stan pricked up his ears. The lady! What lady? Why was the Frenchman so nervous as he tore open the note? And that seal on the envelope? It seemed familiar. Was it possible this note was from Patricia?

"Just a minute," said Boissard, white-faced, as he met the husband's accusing eyes.

Not a word was spoken until the handbag had been found and delivered—a blue velvet trifle—with silver letters that Stanley knew well. Patricia's bag! There it lay on the mantelpiece over the fireplace, which must mean that . . .

When the boy had gone Stan said quietly: "Well, Captain, this puts a new slant on the situation. I judge that note is from my wife?"

"Yes—er—she called here for a few moments with Mrs. Hammond and—er—she left her bag."

"When was that?"

"Why—er—yesterday—yesterday afternoon."

It was evident the Frenchman was lying, but Stanley prolonged the suspense—he was thinking what he must do now.

"I see. Mrs. Hammond and my wife called here at your apartment—yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes, Mrs. Hammond has been interesting herself in the fête we are getting up for French consumptive children."

"I understood you to say that you hadn't seen my wife since you said good-bye to her—the day before yesterday?"

"I—er—I meant that I hadn't seen her—alone."

"Then you weren't alone with my wife yesterday?"

There was just a suggestion of menace in the slight stress that Stan put upon the words *my wife*.

"Why, no, of course not, the ladies remained only *un petit moment*."

The officer smiled pleasantly, showing his white teeth.

"And that note? She just asked you to send back her bag—is that all?"

"*Parfaitment.*" Pierre made a careless gesture as if to throw the crumpled sheet into the fire.

"Wait! I'd like to see it."

"*Mais voyons, monsieur, ça ne se fait pas.*"

"Meaning that it isn't done. I get you; but I call your attention to the fact that I am this lady's husband. Come! Let me have it."

Stan spoke pleasantly enough, but Boissard understood quite well what was back of that American smile. He hesitated, then changed to angry defiance.

"I will not allow you to see this note—nevair!"

"Ah, that's better! Now we'll get at the facts. My wife *was* here with you—alone?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Last night."

"At what time?"

"I—er—I'm not sure."

"Was it late—as late as eleven?"

"Possibly."

"When did she leave?"

"I—I did not notice the hour."

"You must know how long she stayed—*about* how long?"

"Perhaps—twenty minutes."

"Why did she come? Did you ask her to come? Did you know she was coming?"

The officer hesitated.

"I called her on the telephone, monsieur. I felt that I must see her—once more. I could not leave America without saying *adieu*. It was not possible. In my place you would have done the same."

Again that look of fine dignity in the foreigner's dark eyes. Stan felt a certain admiration for him. After all Pierre was only following out the accepted code—lying for the woman he loved, to shield her from suspicion.

"I can't quite imagine myself in your place—tempting another man's wife to come to my apartment—at night—after I had given my word of honor that I would never see her or try to see her again."

The words were calmly, stingingly insulting.

"Let us have no more words," cried Boissard. "I will give you justification for—anything. Now then! I love your wife. I shall stay here—where she is. I refuse to sail. I withdraw my promise. I shall see your wife, monsieur, when—

ever she does me the honor to allow me to see her. *Voilà!*"

He snapped his fingers at Stanley.

Still Stan controlled himself; he was awed by a thought that had swept startlingly into his consciousness. Here was a way to find out how much real manliness there was behind these melodramatic protestations. A quick and simple test for this Frenchman. Did he dare to make it? Had he the courage?

Stan withheld the words that burned on his lips, drawn apart for a moment into the sanctuary of his own soul; he was saying to himself that God would forgive him for seeming to desecrate the most holy thing in his life by temporizing. Only seeming! And Patricia would forgive him, if she knew. Then, with a strangely hushed and conciliatory manner he replied:

"Suppose we cut out bluster and exaggerations. We're facing the biggest thing in our lives. We both need to keep our heads. It's hard for me to admit it, but—I'll give you credit for being sincere in what you said about my wife. It was almost impossible—asking too much of human nature—for you not to have seen her last night."

"Ah, monsieur!" responded Boissard, mollified by this new attitude.

"We'll say we both love her—more than we ever have loved or ever will love any woman. We both want to help her, to make her happy—not to harm her. Is that right?"

"Harm Patricia? I would die for her."

Stan's eyes narrowed, his strong teeth flashed in a tortured smile that would have disturbed Pierre had he known its significance.

"I guess we'd both be glad to die for her, and perhaps—before we get through—" he checked himself, while Boissard studied the American under vaguely apprehensive brows. He was puzzled by this uncanny mildness in a man who did not look mild.

"Yes?"

"There's one thing that I want to get settled, in my mind; what is Patricia's real feeling for you. If I knew that she loves you as deeply as—say as deeply as, say *half* as deeply as I love her, I wouldn't hesitate a moment, I'd step aside, I—I'd let you have her."

"Ah, monsieur!"

"But how can I be sure of that? She thought she loved me. How do I know she isn't mistaken about you?"

Pierre was silent. He saw or thought he saw the point towards which the conversation was drifting. He was making up his mind whether

he would be justified in allowing Stanley to read Patricia's note.

"Monsieur," he said, "I find myself in an unspeakably embarrassing position. What can be more painful to a man of heart, a man of honor, than to lay before a husband whom he respects and whose distress he sincerely sympathizes with—"

"Never mind that."

"To lay before him evidence, that a beloved and beautiful wife has bestowed her affection elsewhere. My heart bleeds for you, but—as you say *trés justement*, we are facing a supreme moment, we must think not only of ourselves, but of one who—"

"That's enough! Let me have the evidence," cut in Stan, whose big, red-knuckled hands were twitching ominously.

At this with a deferential bow the foreigner handed over Patricia's note and stood, pale and tense, while Stan read it, read the words that doomed his hopes.

"I am sorry, monsieur, ver-ry sorry," murmured Pierre.

"I see," was Stan's only comment as he finished. "Now we *will* burn it," and he flung the unhappy message into the flames.

"It looks as if Patricia is bound to go to you,"

he resumed; "nothing can stop her. Very well, she'll have to go either as your wife or your mistress. There isn't any other way. We'll discuss these two possibilities. You say you won't marry her?"

"I have shown you why I *cannot* marry her. I would be the happiest man in the world, if—"

"Yes, yes, I know. Don't go over that religious stuff. You can't marry her. So she'll have to be your mistress? Is that it?"

This blunt presentment of the case took Boisard's breath away; but, pressed by Stan, he admitted that such a development was not beyond the bounds of possibility. Poor human nature—it was weak.

"And you propose to allow this to happen?" pursued the husband. "You know perfectly well, as a man of the world, what the future will hold for my wife if she casts her lot with you—in this way—don't you?"

Pierre thrust forth his exquisitely cared-for hands with their long distinguished fingers in a gesture of pitiful incapacity. He felt that this interview was sweeping him beyond his depth. What could he say? What could any man say to such a preposterous question—from a woman's husband?

"Alas, monsieur, we are in an *impasse* from

which I see no issue. As a man of honor I cannot leave Patricia—”

Stan bounded to his feet and the explosion of his rage, long suppressed, was a thing to see.

“Man of honor!” he strode towards Boissard. “You blackguard!”

The Frenchman rose—livid, shaken from his smooth correctness.

“Ah, it has come,” he stammered.

“Come? You bet it’s come. I’ve waited to see if there’s a shred of decency in you, but there isn’t. You’re yellow all through. Now, then, listen to me. I know how Patricia feels. She loves you, there’s no doubt about it. That note was a cry from her soul and—by the Lord Harry I’m going to see that you marry her and give her the protection of your name, if it’s the last thing I do on this earth—which it probably will be,” he added bitterly.

“No!”

“No?”

Stan advanced slowly until he came close to his rival, terrible in his wrath and in the justice of his cause. Pierre did not speak, did not move, but stood as if frozen to the floor.

“Look into my eyes,” ordered Creighton. “What do you see there—out of your precious soul that you’re so anxious to save? Am I bluff-

ing? Do you think so? Am I ready to go to any lengths—*any* lengths—understand? Do you believe it? Look!"

The Frenchman looked, blinked, tried to straighten himself defiantly, sought blindly to assert himself in some way, and failed. His eyes sank. His courage oozed out. He was beaten, cowed without a struggle and could only whimper: "I—I believe it."

"Ah! Go to that telephone. Call up my wife—at her apartment. She's waiting there, hoping for some word of comfort. Tell her you got her note. Give her an answer. Go on."

Pierre obeyed, moving mechanically like a prisoner under sentence.

"What—what shall I tell her?"

"Tell her you want her to be your wife. Tell her you've thought it over, you're happy about it. Go on."

Again Pierre obeyed and Stan listened to a one-sided telephone conversation that was certainly out of the ordinary for a loving husband to hear.

When it was over Creighton said: "Whatever happens, you are *never* to let her know that you asked her to marry you under any sort of pressure from me—say it!"

Pierre's dark eyes were fixed on the floor from

which he never once looked up. In a tremulous whisper he made the promise:

"I—I will never let her know."

"Perhaps you can make amends for what you've done—with her to encourage you. You've got that to live for."

"I—I'll try."

"My lawyer will attend to the divorce formalities. He will communicate with you. I'll pay for everything, concede everything."

"You are generous," the Frenchman bowed.

For some moments the two stood silent listening to the faint roar of the elevated, to the clang of neighboring trolley cars. Then Stan turned to go.

"Well, I guess that's all. I won't see you again. I'll be getting back to the Coast. Oh! I don't want to rub it in, but—do you know what would have happened, if you had acted differently just now? Suppose you had said to me: 'I love her more than my life, but not more than my God. If I've got to choose between my life and my duty to God, I'll choose my duty to God.' Do you know what I would have done? Do you?"

"I think I know—now."

"Yes, we see these things too late. It would have been my move, and—there wouldn't be any need of a divorce—understand?"

"I—I understand."

"Good-by." Stan lingered a moment at the door, his eyes fixed upon his broken enemy.

II

Stan walked away heavy-hearted. He had triumphed over his rival, but it was an empty victory. He had lost Patricia. Whatever happened now he had lost Patricia.

Aimlessly he strolled down Madison Avenue, turning over in his mind the one question that remained to be answered—had he performed his full and final duty to his wife? Was there nothing left for him to do now but go away and try to forget? Was it right to hide from her the fact that Pierre was a quitter? Could he let her marry such a man? Suppose Pierre had a secret prison record and Stan knew this? Would he be justified in holding back that knowledge? No! And yet a crime against the state was less serious than a crime against God. A traitor to his religion—through cowardice—that's what Pierre was!

On the other hand, Patricia loved Boissard. She might never find out the truth about him. The glamor of her love might shield him. And

even if she did know, she might be happier with him than without him. Women were queer creatures, apt to lavish their tenderness upon the weak rather than the strong.

One thing was certain, if Stan told Patricia what had happened, she would hate him. She might turn against the Frenchman, but she would never forgive Stanley for forcing this ordeal upon her lover, for shattering her radiant dream. She would repudiate Stan irrevocably, even though she repudiated Boissard at the same time.

Creighton strode along brooding over this . . .

Well, what of it? What if he did lose her? He had lost her already. A woman cannot love two men at the same time, and she loved Pierre. In any event Stan was out of it. All that he could do was to help her a little, or try to help her, in this crisis, and then fade away. Pat was only twenty-two, a child. She had years before her, and if she could only make a new start, a right start . . .

That was it, a right start. He must influence her to do what was *right*, regardless of any other consideration. He must do right himself. And it wasn't right to let a woman marry a man when some essential fact regarding this man's honor was deliberately concealed from her. Therefore,

the conclusion of the whole thing was that he must tell Patricia what had happened to-night between himself and Pierre. He *must* do it.

Stanley walked on . . .

Wait! Was he deceiving himself with sophisticated reasoning? Was he trying to justify himself for doing something that he really wanted to do? Was he unconsciously influenced by hatred and jealousy in thinking that he ought to tell Patricia? Was there in his heart a sneaking idea that in her distress and loneliness she might come back to him?

Stanley pondered this . . .

No, his motives were clear and unselfish. As God was his witness he had no thought save for the happiness and welfare of this dear child who needed help so much and who had no one but him to help her. He must decide for her, he must act for her and—yes, he must tell her the truth.

Two hours later—long after midnight—Creighton was wandering wearily along the silent and deeply shadowed streets in the neighborhood of Patricia's apartment. He had telephoned to her an hour before, thinking that he might as well have this last painful meeting over with while he had the resolution to face it. But the reply had come that Mrs. Creighton had gone out at

half-past eleven. Mrs. Creighton! She would not be bearing his name much longer. She would want her divorce, no matter what she decided about Pierre.

Strange that Patricia had left the house at that late hour! Where had she gone? It was now after one and she had not returned. Could anything have happened? Had she received a telegram? A summons over the phone? The colored girl in the hall was sleepily ignorant and indifferent as to this. So Stan had walked on . . . waiting.

He thought of Pierre, but rejected that possibility. Even the Frenchman's buoyant nature must have had enough of emotional strain for one night without a meeting with Patricia that would necessarily be full of agitations. And if she in her joy had telephoned to him, he would have postponed seeing her until the next day.

Stan leaned against the broad stone wall that borders Morningside Park along the ascending avenue and drank in the beauties and mystery of the night. Here and there on benches underneath the gently swaying trees he discerned dim couples sitting close together, lost in the eternal ecstasy of their young happiness, oblivious to the passing of time. In the distance beyond the spread of verdure lay the vast city, drowsing,

throbbing less intensely after the day's emotions. How many hearts would face the morrow, as he would, with little hope or joy left in them. A pitiful business this living and loving, he reflected. What should he do now with his strength and his ambition? What was there left to do?

Stan strolled aimlessly along the granite rampart that sloped upwards like an imposing gallery above the park below, and suddenly his eye was caught by the flutter of a dress as a woman, with a hand on her companion's arm, came up to the higher level. A moment later these two, blissfully absorbed in each other, reached the sidewalk and, as the electric lights fell full upon their faces, Stanley recognized Patricia and Pierre. He stood motionless in the shade of a maple and watched them pass slowly. So close were they that he sensed a delicate and familiar fragrance and caught a look of indescribable joy in his wife's eyes as she murmured, turning towards the park and sleeping city and clinging close to her lover; "Oh, my darling! Isn't it wonderful! Isn't it beautiful!"

Then they moved on, crossing the avenue, and Stan's eyes followed them.

God! What was he to do? This was the moment for him to speak, to carry out his clearly

formed and well justified intention; but he saw now that he could not do it. The thing was quite impossible. He would never tell Patricia what kind of man Pierre was. Never!

CHAPTER VIII

PIERRE ASKS PATRICIA TO MARRY HIM

(Written by Patricia)

"Love consists in desiring to give our own to another and in feeling as our own another's delight."

Tuesday.

PIERRE has asked me to be his wife! He will take me as I must be—a divorced woman! I have not yet recovered from the shock of joy and amazement that came with his telephone message last night. Love has triumphed as Stan predicted. And to think—to remember!—that passion *almost* conquered. I tremble as I recall that night I went to Pierre's apartment. How did I dare? It was sheer madness, but I was fighting for my happiness. I wanted Pierre. I wanted him beyond everything in the world. And I would have been swept completely off my feet had not that old Puritan ancestor of mine stalked out of the dusty years in the very nick of time, stiffened my backbone, starched up my will, collared me,

so to speak, and marched me home. I hated him at the time, wept hysterically; but an hour later as I lay in the darkness, my burning face buried in the cool white pillow—body throbbing, mind seething—how I blessed and respected that old ancestor.

All through the next day I waited for some message from Pierre, hoping against hope; but none came. In the evening, heart-sick and despairing, I remembered that I had left my bag at his place. Making an excuse of this, I sent him a passionate note . . . but it seems the boy was delayed.

At eleven I went to bed, leaden-hearted, and at a quarter past the telephone shrilled through the quiet hall. I leaped up, slipperless and without kimono, to answer it. Then, as his voice came singing back to me over the wire, the pulses in my throat and temples throbbed dizzyingly. His words struck on my ears, increasing my sense of faintness. He had changed his mind . . . *he wanted to marry me!*

My answers came in dispassionate monosyllables, I would see him in the morning . . . yes, in the morning. Then I hung up calmly, went back to my room, crawled into bed and lay still. I was stunned.

Gradually the full import of this message beat

its way home to my brain. I was seized by an overmastering joy. Had I understood? I must know—immediately. What had broken down Pierre's iron resolve? How could he have stood out against me in our stormy scene the night before . . . and changed so completely now?

Without turning on the light I groped my way back to the telephone and called Pierre. His voice came gruff and abrupt, a little petulant, but softened as he recognized mine; he pleaded weariness. Then, realizing that my feelings were hurt, he yielded and arranged to meet me at the Grand Central Station.

And so we met at midnight in this queer place, amid the rush and ceaseless flow of humanity. It was not a lyrical setting for our happiness, but his words atoned as we sat there, lost in our secluded corner, while the tides of the world hurried past.

"I'm sorry, dear," I began penitently, "I ought not to have insisted upon your coming . . . you look so tired . . ."

"It is nothing. I will soon be myself . . ."

"Pierre, listen, dear! I realize how much you have given up for my sake, but, oh! I'll give back so generously in love that—you cannot regret."

His hand tightened on mine; my heart seemed too big for my body.

"Tell me how it happened," I begged, and his face was transfigured as he said: "Why, my dear, it was a miracle, a direct answer to my prayers. All along I had told myself that God and life had promised you to me, that love such as ours, starting from a deep, spiritual source, could not die. I clung to my faith in the face of apparent defeat." There came into his eyes a queer, strained look.

"You do not tell me what I want to hear," I reproached.

"I tell you everything," he answered, "when I say that Love is more powerful than any other force in life, more compelling even than religion. It *is* religion. Some angel put you in my path; and from the first I realized that you could help me make my life what it should be."

"Pierre!" I cried joyfully. "Pierre, do you mean that?"

He sighed heavily. "I would have had it different, *chérie*. I would have had you first, led you to *my* altar; but that could not be. *Mon Dieu!* but we are weak, we humans. Back and forth we sway like the treetops in a wind." Then with gathering passion: "Weak! Cowards!"

But now our love rose imperiously, demanding more discreet surroundings, and we passed out into the night. Pierre would have hailed a taxi

had not I, with a new little proprietary air, censored his extravagance, pointing out that we must begin to economize. Inwardly I rejoined that I had checked my impulse to take an apartment after my raise in salary. Saving, with the incentive of our approaching marriage, would become an interesting game. I played with this idea as we made our way over to the Avenue and climbed lurchingly up the narrow winding steps to a seat on top of a bus.

We rode on, silent and content, under a black sky a-thrill with stars. With Pierre's love I must measure up to many expectations. I must make up to him for broken family ties, for loss of fortune, and most of all I must build up his ideal of good so that he could never feel that he had renounced his God in renouncing his creed.

And so home through the park . . . happy!
. . . happy!

Thursday.

Stan came to say good-by this evening. I was shamed of the indecently joyous atmosphere that clung about me, for back of the steady light in his good gray eyes was an expression so anguished and tender that I felt wicked. It was dastardly to wound a man like Stan—simple, open, wholesome as God's good gifts of sunshine and sleep,

or the wide expanse of blue seas and sky. My throat tightened uncomfortably.

Stan is too good for me, good in a direct, unaffected, challenging way that erases all cobwebby dreams and demands realities of fine fiber. Pierre's goodness and fineness are of the supercultured kind; they satisfy the hungry æsthetic side of me, but stripped of fine words and fine feathers, of his impressive traditional background, how well would his *realities* show up? No matter! I love him, weaknesses and all. I love him perhaps a little more because I must forgive.

Stan seated himself clumsily in my protesting little handpainted rocker, and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Waste of words to ask how things are with you, Pat," he said with a valiant effort at cheeriness. "Your heart is in an O. K. state of coziness. Didn't I tell you it would all come out right?"

I choked down the lump in my throat.

"Oh, Stan! You have been good to me," I stammered. "Don't think that all along I haven't appreciated—just how splendid you are."

"I guess we appreciate each other, Pat. I know you're as clean and fine a woman as God ever made, but—there's no use trying to fiddle around and patch up an answer to this affinity stuff. It

can't be done. Some people draw one like a magnet; others don't. Sometimes it means happiness; sometimes hell. But go to the magnet one must." He ran his hands through his hair, those well-shaped, generous-sized hands that had always made me shiver a little because they were too hairy and freckled. But they were speaking hands, full of power. Then he rose, shaking his clothes into place, trying to bridge the silence that settled over us.

"I'll be pulling out for Montecito soon. Back to the bungalow. Might drop me a line if there's any stuff you want."

Another silence, and now abruptly his embarrassment left him. "Pat," he said earnestly, putting his arms about my shoulders and drawing me back to him, "I don't have to ask you, I know you, trust you, but just *be on guard*. It will be damned hard. Love always makes it hard, no matter how fine we are. But until you are his wife, Pat, until then . . . remember you bear my name. It's a good clean name . . . Pat, my darling! . . ." With sudden passion he crushed me to him, his great body shaken by slow, hard sobs.

And the next moment he had gone.

CHAPTER IX

ENTER MARGOT

IN spite of his inglorious behavior in the scene with Creighton, Captain Boissard did not regard himself as an ignoble person. After all he had only yielded before the superior strength of a desperate adversary. He had defended his religious convictions to the best of his ability, but he had been crushed by a wild man. What more could he have done except to let Stanley kill him? And that would have brought dishonor upon his name and family. No, it was his duty to yield, just as one yields to a highwayman. God would forgive him.

With such poor sophistication did Boissard bolster up his self-respect during the fortnight following Stan's departure for the West. And, thanks to that marvelous power possessed by all of us of believing what we wish to believe and of seeing things as we wish to see them, he soon found himself restored to a measure of self-complacency. It could scarcely have been otherwise

for a man of his temperament, madly in love and now privileged to enjoy unrestricted meetings with the lady of his choice, meetings of delicious fondness. How wonderfully things had shaped themselves! Pierre had been forced to do the thing that with all his soul he longed to do, but never would have done, unconstrained. To make an ungracious comparison, it was as if a reformed gambler had been compelled to gamble, or a reformed drunkard to drink. His love for Patricia grew and grew—if that were possible—and he longed for the day when, after lagging divorce formalities, she would be his wife.

There was one cloud on the horizon, however, one carefully hidden fact in his existence that was causing the Frenchman anxiety. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and a man's matrimonial security is no greater than the discretion of any jealous woman who may have cause to threaten it. In this case, to Boissard's intense regret, there was such a woman—Margot, she of the dark eyes and quick, vindictive temper. Hell has no fury, the poet tells us, like that of beauty scorned, and Pierre was giving some apprehensive thought to that warning.

Poor Pierre! A weak, not a wicked man! At no time had he loved Margot or even pretended to love her. But he was kind-hearted, full of



Margot

sympathy for a disconsolate fair one, and in sentimental affairs he was a Parisian, that is, he saw no particular harm in certain things that are regarded with disapproval (at least theoretically) in America. For years, ever since Margot was a little girl, he had been adored by her, and when she came to young womanhood he was ardently pursued by her, so much so that at one time he was tempted by her fortune and had even considered a mercenary union. But, to his credit, be it said, he had put aside this lure and had learned with relief of her marriage to that middle-aged, dandified fortune-hunter, Don Hammond, whom the capricious heiress had finally annexed for reasons of her own—chiefly a longing for the freedom that a rich young matron whose better half is financially dependent upon her may insist upon if she wants it. Which Margot did.

Following her marriage, Mrs. Don Hammond, restless and disillusioned, after some months of a vain effort to adjust herself happily to her new condition, had silenced whatever small voice of conscience there was and allowed herself to drift along the pleasant way of her inclinations, this leading her more and more strongly toward Pierre. Soon she was in full pursuit, using all her advantages of purse and person to achieve the object of her obsessing desires.

And so the thing had come about not too odiously, in the balmy air of Montecito, with its lazy, pleasure-laden round, during a month that the handsome captain had spent there, visiting the Hammonds. In a way he had never been very guilty, only a compromiser with duty, prone to follow the line of least resistance, in this as in other things. And never for a moment had he worried about Don Hammond, whom he regarded as a hopeless fool—a bit of a knave, too—this being a fairly accurate estimate.

But Pierre had reason enough to worry a few months later when, having returned to New York (for government duties), he found Margot following him promptly, she in a state of romantic exaltation over this realization of her life-long dream. Now Pierre belonged absolutely to her. Alas!

It is likely that this one-sided *affaire* would have dragged along to some kind of a forlorn ending, without dramatic complications, but for that meeting at the book-shop, that momentous meeting when the flame of real love flashed up suddenly in the hearts of Patricia and Pierre. How much difference a single meeting can make in two lives! A single revealing glance! A touch of the hand! Life was never the same to Boissard after that, never would be,

A man may have trifled with women for years, taken his *bonnes fortunes* as they came, and yet be capable of loving in the great way when he finds the *one* able to inspire him. So it was with Pierre. He could not, after knowing Patricia, continue his insincere dalliance with Margot. Let the consequences be what they might, he could not do this. Hence embarrassed weeks, with all manner of excuses for failure on his part to make or to keep appointments with the sighing and yearning Mrs. Hammond. Business engagements! Unavoidable absences. Pretended colds or headaches, evasions, postponements—anything to keep the disconsolate lady at a distance. Even in Paris where they understand these things it is felt that to break with a sweetheart (*rompre*) is a difficult and dreaded procedure; and this was New York. The captain was at his wit's end most of the time. He was paying for his weakness.

Pierre was engaged to marry the one woman in all the world for him. No other presence now could thrill him. No other voice could charm him. Patricia! And her closest friend was Margot!

What would Margot do about it, for she was not an unobservant person, nor was she one to sit down meekly and let another woman run

away with her lover. What would Margot do?

What Margot did was to call at Pierre's apartment unceremoniously and unannounced, early one morning about a week after Stan's farewell. She had been in this apartment before, it must be acknowledged, but always in a tender and trusting mood. Now she came suspicious, keen-eyed, coldly resolved to be put off no longer.

Pierre received her with his usual deference. He began the usual glib excuses about government responsibilities, family matters, various worries—none of which was well done. It was impossible to simulate affection. His old emotional tricks were failing him.

Margot studied him and her heart sank; she knew the signs; but still she waited, chattered along, showing her pretty teeth, coming close to him with an artless movement that revealed her sumptuous form in its smart spring garbing. She had brought him an armful of roses from their country place—she had just motored in. Weren't they lovely? Come, he must help her put them in water.

Pierre helped her, listening to her running talk and answering as best he could. At the inevitable moment he kissed her, a perfunctory kiss, and she pouted her displeasure.

"*Chérie*, what is it?" she pleaded. "You are strange, different. Tell me."

More excuses while her face clouded, her frown deepened. The outbreak was near, but she made one more conciliatory effort. He was tired out. He was ill. He needed a change. What would he say to a week's rest in the Catskills? She knew a cozy little inn—absolutely quiet—delicious cooking—they could take wonderful strolls through the hills. And so on. Would he come?

The Frenchman hesitated, understanding quite well that the crisis was at hand, and, as he wavered, his eyes fell upon Patricia's picture, seen through the curtains of his alcove bedroom, Patricia's picture, framed in red leather, standing on the *table de nuit* underneath a rosary of large wooden beads from Bethlehem.

"I can't do it. It's impossible," he said quietly.

Margot's eyes had followed her lover's glance, and now her fury broke.

"You don't care for me any more. Always excuses—excuses . . ."

The storm swept on through its inevitable phases—bitter words, tears, pleadings, reproaches; more tears, more reproaches, while Pierre tried vainly to appease the sufferer, vainly because he stubbornly refused to say the

one thing that was capable of appeasing her, he would not say that he loved her.

"It's all Patricia's fault. I've suspected it for weeks. Now I know. You're in love with her—*are you?*"

Boissard nodded, glad to throw aside dissimulation and find strength in his sincerity.

"Yes, I am in love with her," he avowed. "It's different from anything I've ever known—ever dreamed of. I—I'm sorry to hurt you, dear. You and I have been happy together—in a way, but it couldn't last. You know it couldn't. You have obligations that—"

"So has Patricia. She's a married woman."

"Yes, she told me. It's unfortunate she did not tell me sooner, but—it's all right now, her husband will give her a divorce."

"A divorce? Pierre! What do you mean?"

"We are going to be married."

"Married? You're going to marry Patricia? You?"

She stared at him with wide-open, startled eyes.

"I'm going to marry her," he answered gravely.

"You—you love her as much as—that?" Margot gasped, for in spite of her frivolous, selfish nature, she was a devout Catholic and knew better than any one what this meant to him. She knew the strength of his proud family traditions

and prejudices, she knew the sincerity of his belief.

"Yes," he said, but she watched him shrewdly, unconvinced.

"Pierre, there is something you are keeping back. I see it in your eyes. I know it. Tell me—*tell me!*"

Then he told her, little by little, answering her questions at first with denials and evasions, but gradually allowing her to get the truth from him, the whole miserable truth about that tragic interview with Stan, ending in his enforced proposal of marriage.

"You did it under compulsion?" rejoiced Margot. "Because he threatened you? You don't love her—you don't love her!"

"I do love her. I'm proving it now. If I didn't love her, I'd say so, wouldn't I, just to satisfy you? I'd tell you that I don't want to marry Patricia, that I'm doing it under protest, that I'm heart-broken about it and love you a thousand times more, only you are married yourself. Don't you see what plausible lies I could tell you if I were not sincere? But I am sincere. I love Patricia—more than anything."

Margot's comely shoulders lifted skeptically.

"It doesn't go, dear man. You're trying to make the best of a rotten situation. You *don't*

love Patricia better than anything. If you did you would have married her without Stanley's assistance. Tell me, suppose Stan hadn't interfered? What would you have done? Ah! You see you can't answer. You needn't. I know what you would have done."

Her mocking, cynical smile cut him to the quick; seeing which she became swiftly comforting and caressing.

"Never mind, Pierre. These things have to happen—I mean marriages. *Tu aimeras ta petite Margot la même chose, n'est-ce-pas?*"

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"Oh, nothing," she laughed, but he felt a vague threat behind her restored gayety.

CHAPTER X

A FOOL'S PARADISE

(*Written by Patricia*)

Two weeks later.

MARGOT came to see me last night and . . . I am writing down what happened. It is all unreal to me. I feel nothing—believe in nothing. An indifference more searing than hate dominates me.

I had been to a concert at Æolian Hall with Pierre. It was an exquisite program, music that brought us into perfect communion. I came back to my room at a little after ten, humming with contentment, and found Margot waiting for me. She was sitting, quietly reading. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes brilliant. She looked beautiful, cold and hard as a diamond in her flame-colored evening gown.

"Why, Margot," I exclaimed, "how you startled me! . . . Been here long?"

"Half-hour or so. Don is over at the Clare-

mont—stupid party!—and I just ran away. He said he'd stop for me about midnight. You've been so artful at dodging me, *ma belle*, that I thought I'd catch you on the wing."

She carefully marked her magazine and laid it by on the table, stifling a half yawn, as her shrewd black eyes held mine. I suddenly felt guilty and uneasy. I *had* deliberately avoided her, putting off the day when I must confess to her about Pierre. This was because of an unanalyzable fear I had experienced in her presence.

I had mechanically thrown off my light spring jacket and small fur, but stopped at my hat.

"Make yourself at home, *chérie*," laughed Margot. "Get into a negligée. I've a lot to talk to you about."

I obeyed her without comment, carefully put away my clothes, selected a soft blue negligée, let down my hair (I had commenced to double it under at the nape of my neck since Pierre had begged me to let it grow out) and settled myself back among the pillows of my couch.

"Go ahead," I said. "Anything wrong? Surely Don isn't exercising a husband's authority . . ."

Margot checked me with a contemptuous shrug, drew her chair close to the couch and stared hard at me.

"You're not quite so desperate as you were the other night, Pat," she laughed unpleasantly. "Just the same I spoke the truth when I said that you're living in a Fool's Paradise."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Pierre is not going to marry you."

My slow-burning resentment flared into words:

"That's my own affair—and Pierre's," I said.

"Please understand that, Margot."

Again, that hard, unpleasant laugh.

"Did Pierre ask you to say that to me?"

"We have never discussed you."

"*Eh bien, ma chère*, let's not quarrel. He's not worth it . . . no man is." She settled back more comfortably, tapping with her slender, discreetly-ringed fingers. "Pat, you're the same dear, lovable little fool. I like you, always have, always must, even if you do stand in my light."

"In your light! Absurd! How could I stand in your light? I may as well tell you now, Margot, Pierre loves me—enough to marry me even in the face of the disapproval of the Catholic Church. That's all there is to it. Stan has gone West to start divorce proceedings. You said you cared for Pierre once and—I didn't want to flaunt my happiness in your face."

Suddenly I felt very tired and unhappy. I wished that Margot would go away. But she

sat calmly with that mocking, all-knowing expression about her eyes and mouth.

"I take it back, Pat. I said Pierre wouldn't marry you, didn't I? Well, he would. He's a pitiful weakling. But *you* will never marry him."

I was so on my nerves now that I felt a childish wish to cry, also to do physical violence to this dark, lovely creature leaning over me with her confusing words and her deadening atmosphere. "Go away," my heart cried. "Leave me my happiness and beliefs." But aloud I said:

"Really, you're too mystifying. What's the dark secret?"

Anger blazed in Margot's eyes. "So that's the tone you take with me, is it? All along I've tried to spare you some of my heartaches. I once hugged a bunch of dreams quite as ecstatic as yours. We all go through that stage. Yours came later than mine, that's all. I know Pierre and his type. I've seen him by the dozen in France—these cultured flowers of the intellectual upper classes who always do and say the right thing at the right time. They would die for their loves, but work and live for them, never! The hard facts of life are depressing to these fine gentlemen. Have you forgotten how kindly I took up the little lie your eyes asked me to tell Pierre that first day at Brentano's? I suggested that

you were a widow . . . Why? Half to please you and half to further my own purposes. Don does not love Pierre. Don's a rotter himself; but he is out and out a rotter, a decent rotter! He actually admits it. And, you see . . . *he has had good cause to hate Pierre!*"

My eyes met hers incredulously.

"I never tricked myself into believing that Pierre loved me," she went on shamelessly, "but . . . he found me beautiful, desirable. I hoped he would come to love me."

"And you thought he might—marry you?"

"Marry? No. We are both Catholics. I wouldn't be guilty of turning him from his faith."

"But you would steal his love?"

Margot shrugged. "In order to get a shred of happiness in this old world we have to pay—and others have to pay. Don never imagined I loved him. He wanted money. I wanted a husband and freedom from my father's authority. It was a fair exchange. Don is getting his share of the bargain."

I made no comment and Margot went on:

"With you it is different, Pat. You have a real man for a husband. I love Pierre, but I know—so do you—that Stan is worth a dozen Pierres."

The penetrating, eagle-like light in her eyes

died out and she became once more the easy-going, likeable Margot that I had known; but her voice was passionately earnest.

“Pat, don’t ever make the mistake I made. So far you’ve held on to the best in you. You’ve come through unscathed and still have a chance to know real, sane happiness. When a woman gives herself, it’s her soul and all. A man can wrap up his best self, fold it away in lavender, trot out the remainder for a little spree, then call on the way home for his little lavender-scented soul—as good as new. He reserves this for the woman he really loves, and feels no qualms of conscience before her. That precious little sanctified bit of himself atones for all his wanderings.”

“You mean that a man can love two women at the same time?”

“He might; men have elastic hearts; but I wasn’t thinking of that. I meant that a man can love one woman and amuse and flatter himself with the beauty of another.”

There came a blinding flash in my brain.

“Pierre! You!” I cried.

“Yes,” she confessed.

“I shared him with—*you!* Then all his beautiful words—lies!”

"No, *chérie*. They were true, *they* came from his lavender-scented soul. That was yours. It never was mine."

Margot put out her hand in a movement of pity, but I shook her off in white fury.

"Pierre has never been mine since he knew you. I give you my word. He told me he loved you, told me he would marry you . . . told me the real reason *why* he would marry you."

"The *real* reason?" I flashed back. "What other reason is there than his love—our love, a good, clean love . . ."

"Wait!"

"No!" I rushed on. "Do you think I'm going to blame Pierre for mistakes he committed before I knew him? No! This is only another proof that he needs me. Nothing can take him from me. Do you hear? Nothing! Nothing! I am going to marry him."

There came into Margot's face a look of concentrated fury, jealousy, hatred. She was like a deadly serpent about to strike. One of us would emerge from this interview crushed. I knew it.

"Then you may as well know, *ma chère*," she taunted, "that Stan forced Pierre to offer to marry you, yes, *forced him!* In order to save his

precious skin Pierre took you and renounced his faith."

"No! It isn't true!" I cried, but I knew that it was.

"You're better off without him. Bah! A weak man is like a creeping pestilence, he can do more harm than a dozen villains."

"Stan!" I blubbered. "You say Stan . . . forced Pierre! But Stan wants me himself."

"Of course," came the relentless, explaining voice, making clear my damnation. "Of course Stan loves you. That's the reason. There never was such a love. He's a *man*—that husband of yours."

Like a battering ram relentlessly driving home the truth came the memory of Stan's savage words that night in the taxicab: "*He'd better be good to you, or—*"

Still I would not believe.

"No!" I cried in a panic of fear. "Oh! no, Margot! It isn't true. Tell me it isn't true."

Her eyes rested on me compassionately, and as I watched that expression dawn, grow and deepen I read my own doom. I was humiliated in the dust.

"I believe you," I yielded wearily. "Now go away . . . please go . . . *now!* No, I am perfectly well . . . go, go! Leave me alone . . ."

Later.

I do not want to hear his explanations. I will not see him. It would be useless, quite useless. I will go on with my work, on and on and on . . .

CHAPTER XI

THE END OF EVERYTHING

"You're thinking only of the man—not of what he stood for. He stood for everything, good and beautiful; he was my bringer of dreams, my fulfillment of fancy. Losing him, I lose not only this, but the power, the wish, ever to dream again."

FOR a long time after Margot had gone Patricia did not stir from her place among the pillows of her couch. She lay inertly with no positive thought. The only living thing about her seemed to be an insistent pain at her heart, a pain that probed cruelly like an instrument of torture.

If only she could think!

She buried her face in the pillows, beating at them with her clenched fists.

"No, no! It cannot be." Over and over she repeated this like the refrain of a song.

If only she could sleep! She must sleep. There was so much to be done at the office tomorrow. The advance summer fashion number of the *Millinery Review* was coming out. She had some ridiculously pert designs ready—that is almost ready. What was this pain tearing at her

heart? Oh! yes . . . Pierre! Pierre had lied to her. She would never see him again. He and Margot . . . Incredible! Unbelievable! Besides, how could she give him up, yield all her dreams, her beliefs, hopes? She could not! Could not! Dry sobs tore her.

Toward morning Patricia fell into a deep sleep from which she was awakened by the metallic din of her neighbor's alarm clock. She started from the couch, then sank back in nervous fright. Like a malicious enemy lying in ambush, the pain leaped back into her heart, and memory came with it. Some one turned on the shower in the bathroom next door. The water came down in noisy glee, pounding in Patricia's ears, while the bather sang lustily to defy the icy shock.

Were people actually going on just as usual? She must get up. It must be nearly eight o'clock and she was due at the office by nine. How the pulses throbbed over her body! And she burned! Burned!

She hurried to the bathroom and collided with her blithe neighbor who emerged, bright-eyed and pink, from her shower, wrapped in a pale blue kimono.

"Hello!" burst out the radiant one. "What . . . well, say you must have had some little party last night. You look all in."

Patricia got by her. But she oughtn't to have taken the shower. She was cold. Too cold.

The noises of the subway were maddening. They ground on her nerves until she could have cried aloud. The crossings bewildered her. Everything seemed to dart by at once. How many people there were! All going alertly about their business. People! Everywhere people! They jostled her, elbowed her out of their way. She wanted to strike out savagely at them. She hated them. Hated the city. Hated New York. She wanted to get away. How the noises hurt!

All day she worked at her desk. Sick, burning with fever, tormented by her thoughts, Patricia worked on through the office hours, finished her designs, then took a bus and rode down the Avenue to the old Brevoort House where her father was stopping.

As she went up the broad, wooden steps into the old white building her tension lessened. The little Frenchman at the book stall near the door recognized her and bowed deferentially. Her father was well known here. But the night clerk was new, indifferent and curt. No, Mr. Lydig was not in. He had left word that he was dining out with a friend.

Keenly disappointed, Patricia turned away and sought the little waiting room. Two or three

couples were idling there, talking in low voices. She chose a seat by one of the long French windows where she could look out on the brightly lighted Avenue, busy with the traffic of the dinner hour. As she passed an old fashioned mirror, that ran from floor to ceiling, she caught a glimpse of herself. How odd she looked! And *plain!* That was because there was nothing more in the world for her—she had come to the end of everything.

The hours of Patricia's wait were slow torture. She went out into the night, seeking the cool breeze, but the ceaseless noise and movement drove her back. Twice she started to take the bus home and twice she turned back, conquered by the thought of her lonely room.

At last her father came hurrying in, hat and stick in hand, his face full of concern as he discovered Patricia huddled in her corner.

"Why, Pat! Poor child, what is it?"

"I thought you'd never come," she said petulantly, then put her head down and burst into tears. Her voice came brokenly:

"Take me home, Father . . . take me away from this horrible noise. Don't leave me here, please . . ."

Bit by bit, soothing her as best he could, he drew the story from her, all that Margot had told

her, and was convinced of the truth, partly by her half-hearted excuses and baited phrases set for comfort and reassurance. Alas! He saw that what she said was true, and he knew what this meant to his child.

"Patsy, dear, you're making yourself ill. I must take you home. We'll go into all this tomorrow. Come along now . . . had your dinner? . . . Oh! yes, you do. We'll get you something hot, then for a good sleep, and I'll come for you the first thing in the morning. Now just calm down."

.
An hour later as they drove home Patricia dozed in her father's arms, and the next morning when he called for her she had a high fever. The doctor insisted that she be moved to St. Luke's hospital where she could be properly cared for.

"She's on the verge of brain fever," he told her father. "She's had some severe mental shock. It will take care to bridge this crisis."

.
There followed days of delirium and anxiety, and three weeks later Newton Lydig, accompanied by a trained nurse, started across the continent for California, taking poor Patricia back to her anxiously waiting mother.

PART THREE—LOVE WATCHES

CHAPTER I

THE BARRIER OF PRIDE

(Written by Patricia)

*Six months later
in the Ojai Valley.*

"O gracious Mother, in thy vast eternal sunlight,
Heal us, thy foolish children, from our sins;
Who heed thee not, but careless of thy Presence
Turn our bent backs on thee and scratch and scabble
In ash-heaps for Salvation."

PURPLE shadows stealing up the cañons and over the scorched California hills, touching their barren boldness with mystery and beauty. Below, red sandstone, then an olive orchard, its graygreen leaves silvering in the lazy summer breeze; and beyond, the wide sweep of the peaceful valley, enfolded by the giant arms of its hills.

Here, perched on my gray boulder well up its craggy slope, I sit writing, idly, yielding now and again to the impelling languor that overtakes me, a convalescent, living in the open air and sunshine.

“How one loves them,
These wide horizons,
Vague and vast and infinite.”

They tell me I was very ill when they brought me home six months ago. I do not remember much about that, only the amazement when I woke to find myself here. And then the slow building-up, days of courage followed by despair . . . Hot summer nights flooded with moonlight when I, out of all the world, seemed alone with my bitter sweet memories—mother, father and myself! Just as of old!

I can feel the anxious eyes of my parents following me as I move about the house or garden, can sense their suppressed questions, the tenderness they mask with a pathetic studied cheerfulness. Often I feel as if they were my own dear children whom I must shield from unhappiness through me! So we play a little farcical game with one another.

Tuesday.

To-night, under a full moon, as I lay in my low canvas chair in the garden listening to the usual night concert—mocking-birds, crickets, frogs,—a party on horseback passed. Their voices and laughter floated back to me with a merry clitter-

clatter of horse's hoofs. Youth and love! Always the same! Heedlessly happy! Indifferent to the sorrows of those who have dropped by the wayside. The old sharp pang shot through me as I listened—and remembered!

A latticed window opened and mother's voice came, "Patsy, dear! You'd better get a scarf. The dew is falling. You'll be chilled through."

I went into the house wearily.

.

What does a girl do when her heart is broken? And her pride humbled? When she sees that she has made mistakes . . . mistakes? And knows that she may make more? How does she go on living?

WOOZY

(*Speaking suddenly*) Don't be discouraged, Patsy. It will all come out right, if you'll only—

PATRICIA

Go to Stan and tell him I'm sorry and ask him to take me back? No! That's impossible. You can see it's impossible, Woozy. After I've had my own way and gone to New York, after everything has failed me and I—I'm down and out (crying softly)—how can I go to Stan?

WOOZY

I didn't mean that exactly.

PATRICIA

Besides, I don't love him, that is I—I don't think I do.

WOOZY

If you would only ask for guidance.

PATRICIA

Say my prayers? No! I've tried, but—I can't. Why does God make the world so hard for women?

WOOZY

He doesn't. It's a beautiful world for women who obey the law—like mother.

PATRICIA

What law?

WOOZY

The oldest law there is, that it's more blessed to give than to receive. You've only tried receiving. You want everything done for you. Why don't you try doing something for somebody else?

PATRICIA

There you are again—religion.

WOOZY

No. I mean work.

PATRICIA

Haven't I been working? Didn't I get up at seven and slave in an office all day? Wasn't that work?

WOOZY

I said unselfish work. What you did was through ambition—for yourself. Why don't you try some kind of unselfish work?

PATRICIA

(*Hesitating*) I—I'll think about it, Woozy. I'm not going to quarrel with you anyway. I'm too tired.

Wednesday.

I saw the post-man joggling along the road behind his shambling old mare this morning and ran out to get the mail before he put it in the box. He was chattily inclined and I found it hard to listen as Stan's determined hand-writing challenged me from a large square of envelope. It was addressed to father and I was conscious of keen chagrin. I found father in the garden and cajoled him to the hammock in the arbor before I gave him the letter.

"You've never told me," I said, "whether Stan went ahead with the divorce, Father, whether he has written, or anything. I think I ought to know." I waited, with that old unnamed fear running through me.

Father opened his letter with maddening precision before he answered.

"He couldn't very well go on with the divorce

while you were so ill, my dear. I persuaded him to wait until you were well again, since there was no particular rush about it. He wrote twice while you were ill—not since then.” During this father was scanning the letter in a most casual way. “This is merely to say that he got the little box with his mother’s earrings that you sent back. He’s much obliged.”

That was all!

II

Three months later
St. James Park.

For three months I’ve been trying to please Woozy, occupying myself with good works, and the result is—I am forced to admit that *some* women make perfect fools of themselves when it comes to following out independent careers. This is a pity for it gives our righteous guardians an argument that they are quick to seize upon and exaggerate for not giving liberty to *any* of us. It seems that quite a number of silly movie-struck girls have come to Los Angeles thinking they are pretty enough and clever enough to be second Mary Pickfords—and, naturally, some of them are out of jobs.

Some of the leading women in Los Angeles

have organized to find work for these girls—that's where I come in—but the discouraging part of it is that most of these girls will throw up any business position we get them the very minute they hear of even the faintest chance for picture work. It's an obsession! No matter what they have suffered, they still hope on. The *next time* they will land something big. Three hundred dollars a week *at least!* And a star part later! And if they get a little money, they spend it all on clothes, they say they *must* make a good showing in order to attract the directors. Oh, those directors!

It's no use arguing with them, for of course girls *have* become stars overnight, and leaped into fame and fortune through making a lucky hit in some small part. But what a horrible gamble it is!

Saturday night.

I had one good idea anyway, and the ladies on the committee say that I helped put it over splendidly. What these girls who are adrift in Los Angeles—I suppose it's the same in other cities—need especially are decent homes, where they can have reasonable comforts and wholesome food for a modest expenditure. We have established a small Studio Club in an old mansion near Hollywood that we were able to rent on favorable

terms, but we must have more sleeping porches and bathrooms. So I suggested that we start a drive among the public spirited citizens to raise ten thousand dollars, and tonight this effort culminated in a fête with dancing. We had dozens of pretty girls in fetching costumes; and there were crowds willing to spend their money so that we cleared over seven thousand dollars. I was so pleased!

III

Sunday.

To-night as we were finishing dinner father turned his kindly gray eyes on me and said: "By the way, I've good news for you, Pat."

I straightened up eagerly.

"Yes?"

"The lease is up on our Fifty-sixth Street apartment and we go back to New York next month."

"Oh!"

My heart sank and I'm afraid my face showed it. A whole continent between Stan and me! What chance would I ever have to . . . ?

Father was scrutinizing me keenly.

"Why, come," he pinched my cheek playfully, "you don't seem particularly joyful. I thought you'd rise with a shout of thanksgiving."

"I—why, yes, that's fine, Father," I managed, but I could tell that he suspects the truth.

Stan! All through the evening he has been in my thoughts, I can see him plainly . . . laughing, teasing . . . filling his loved old pipe. How he used to exasperate me eating apples! Sinking his strong white teeth into the red skin, noisily snapping off a bite to chew it with juicy satisfaction, one eye cocked in my direction to enjoy my shivers of disgust. He is such a boy! . . . Oh! Stan, if I could only have loved you!

WOOZY

You do love him. You know very well you love him.

PATRICIA

No!

WOOZY

Then why do you think about him all the time? Why aren't you glad to go to New York?

PATRICIA

I hate New York—now. It makes me think of—you know. Besides, I like this Studio work. I take pride in it. What are you laughing at?

WOOZY

Oh, nothing, only—if Stan should move to New York—

PATRICIA

(*Biting her lip, then after a long silence*) It's possible I do love him. He's so fine and—dependable.

WOOZY

A woman can't get along very well without a man's companionship, even if she has a career, can she?

PATRICIA

N-no. I suppose she can't. Men have developed a soundness of judgment and—er—certain practical qualities through centuries of struggle that women can't be expected to have—yet. But women will get these qualities—gradually.

WOOZY

(*Teasing*) In a few centuries. Besides, even when they have careers and are successful in them, women have a certain capacity for loving, haven't they, Pat?

PATRICIA

(*Smiling*) Silly!

WOOZY

And for being loved? Even a woman lawyer wants to be kissed once in awhile, doesn't she? The question is, Who's going to do the kissing? For example, if you went back to New York—without Stan?

PATRICIA

Yes?

WOOZY

You couldn't be working *all* the time. You'd have your evenings and—after all, you're only twenty-three.

PATRICIA

That's it. I'd be lonely. That's why I don't want to go.

WOOZY

You'd meet other men.

PATRICIA

(*With decision*) I don't want to. Mind you, Woozy, I'm not weakening on the question of a woman's right to her liberty, but I admit that one of the things we women do rather easily just now is to make fools of ourselves in regard to some man. We're in a transition period. We are absolutely fitted for artistic careers and business positions; but, as you say, we are also fitted for love. So there you are. It results in complications.

Thursday.

This morning I had an emotional experience that has left me all unnerved. I went to the Los Angeles police station to get information about one of our Studio girls who ran away with a

man, a coarse, flashy individual who promised her everything in the world and then abandoned her. The old, heart-breaking story. It seems there *are* villains in real life after all.

For an hour I waited in a dingy, bare room with a dozen forlorn specimens of womankind, bold-eyed or dejected. Two young girls not over sixteen were chewing gum and giggling together while a blond of eighteen flaunted her spoiled prettiness and powdered her nose. One by one they told their stories to the City Mother, a fat, unilluminated person, I thought, in spite of newspaper eulogies. Where was the light of high purpose shining in her eyes that they talk about? Rather a bored and business-like person, she seemed to me, in her severe black dress with painfully neat collar and cuffs. Another disappointment!

It was all so depressing that I almost turned and fled, but Woozy whispered to me: "March on, Pat. You're a common soldier now. No swashing about in gallant array. You're out for plain service and hard work."

So I stayed, and finally the girl I was seeking, Margaret H——, came in, a Madonna-like beauty. She looked at me out of her big violet eyes and—then she broke down and sobbed.

"Come on, dear!" I said encouragingly. "We'll go for a drive in the car." And I did

my best to comfort her as we took a long run along the smooth, white beach above Santa Monica, close to the in-washing breakers with the purple haze of the Malibu hills beyond. Finally we turned back along an oak-shadowed road and came to the Studio Home. Poor Margaret! How she wept as we swung in through the grilled iron gateway. I was in tears myself.

Think of it! This girl came from a good home in a Middle Western town. Her father is a well-to-do doctor. She has had "advantages" and could have made a good marriage, if she had been willing to stay at home. But she was ambitious. She was sure her beauty and her talent could conquer—just as I was. She wanted her liberty—just as I did. Oh, it's too tragical.

WOOZY

(*Tenderly*) Don't cry, Pat.

PATRICIA

Why shouldn't I cry? It makes me see—what might have happened, if—

WOOZY

No!

PATRICIA

(*Agitated*) Why not? I absolutely trusted Pierre. He was my ideal—incapable of anything base, but—you see we don't understand. We

think we know everything. We read about the double-standard and all that, but when the test comes we—(sobbing) we *do* need to be watched over—a little.

Three weeks later.

Another shock. This afternoon I saw Louis Tong! I almost ran over him as I was driving through the Mexican quarter, taking a bundle of clothing to one of my protégées, who has hidden her distress in a poor room in this old part of town. He shot in front of the Dodge in that slippery way those yellow heathen have. I gasped and looked down into the frightened gleam of his slanting eyes.

“Missey Cleighton!” he cried.

“You!” I exclaimed. “You, Louis Tong, scaring me out of my wits! Here, climb in. I’ve got an errand to do near here, but I can’t let you get away.”

Only one other person could have been more welcome to my sight than this thin-faced, little yellow man. He could give me news of the *other* one.

The car door clicked after him as Louis Tong obeyed me. He sat primly beside me in his neat black Chinese clothes. From beneath his black felt hat hung a long and eloquent queue. His slim

feet were in neat black satin slippers with amazingly clean, thick white soles. His slim hands, an index to his soul, I always told Stan, were folded across his black sateen lap. On the back seat towered the bundle of clothes.

The traffic cop signaled and we darted on our way. Little by little I drew from him news of Stan, and learned that Louis Tong had come to town on business for his master. He is Stan's right-hand man now. A Chinaman's loyalty once won is won forever.

"Him veely sad," Louis Tong assured me as he ended his report.

"Why?" I probed. "Why? He seems content enough mooning over his book. He doesn't need . . . help . . . like other people. He is strong."

The bright eyes silently contradicted me. I understood, and my heart lifted.

"Take care of him, Louis Tong," I begged, as I left him at the entrance of Chinatown. "And tell him . . . tell him, won't you, that I'm of some use in the world—now."

"Him veely sad *for you*, Missy Cleighton," repeated the little man stubbornly. "Man no man without wiffee."

Correct, Louis Tong! And woman is no woman without the man she loves!

Saturday night.

A great revelation has overwhelmed me. It came like a lightning flash and shows what a blind, selfish little ingrate I have been. I have been crying for an hour and even now, as I write, my heart seems to suffocate me. *God teach me, show me the way.*

All my pride is gone.

It happened this evening while Father and I drove into the hills, then walked together, enjoying the wistful beauty of the twilight. I knew that Father was sensing with me all this loveliness and suddenly I felt close to him. My hand tightened on his arm. The long, perplexing barrier between us was breaking down. Sorrow has done what happiness could not.

There were letters when we came home and I watched Father sort them over. At one he paused, his face a puzzle of conflicting emotions, and looked uncertainly at me. It was evidently a letter he did not wish me to see.

"Never mind, Father," I said with a flash of understanding, "I'm ready for it. Please!"

It was from Pierre. The bright blue of the French stamp and the fine, print-like handwriting struck cruelly at memories I had carefully put away—or tried to.

Father looked so grave and kind and friendly standing there beside me. My heart swelled gratefully.

"Don't tell Mother yet, it will worry her," I whispered as I took the letter, then I kissed him swiftly and hurried to my room.

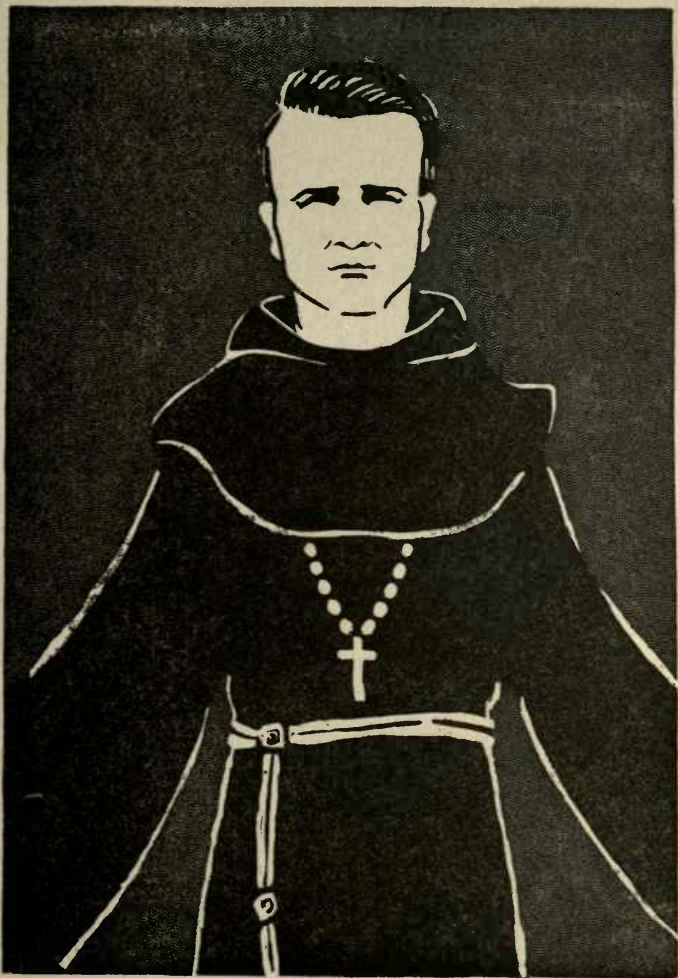
It was a long time before I had the courage to break the seal. It was like opening an old wound, but I finally read the pages, fighting my tears. It was a cry for forgiveness and a last farewell. Pierre has given up the world. After weeks of illness, followed by a period of mad dissipation, he has found peace in the sanctuary and is now about to take the vows of silence, poverty, chastity, in one of the severest Catholic orders. The black robe is to replace his brilliant blue and scarlet. How vividly he comes before me! I can see him striding along at my side humming gayly:

"Car, c'est comm'ci,
Car, c'est comm'ca,
Regardez moi, ma fille."

Pierre a monk!

After referring in deepest humility to his own weakness and unworthiness, his failure to stand by his faith, he passed on to a eulogy of Stan that touched my heart; and he revealed this

amazing thing, that Stan would have died for me, if Pierre had been worthy. He would have slipped out, unnoticed, into the Great Beyond, if Pierre had stood the test of simple manhood. He would have done this so that the divorce-barrier between us might be removed. Such love! And no one would ever have known the truth, for Stan made Pierre promise that he would never reveal this. Now Pierre was breaking his promise so that I might be happy. If it was a sin, he begged forgiveness, as for his other sins. And he asked God's blessing upon me and upon Stan as he withdrew forever into the shadows.



Pierre. . .he withdrew forever into the shadows.

CHAPTER II

THE LONGING

"And then the longing, the longing that is like physical pain, that hunger of the heart for some one intolerably dear. . . ."

STAN CREIGHTON saddled his horse and rode down to the sea. It was an hour before sunrise and he could not sleep. All about him chilling mists steamed up from the ground, a melancholy incense to his heart-sick meditations. To be unhappy in the mountains is a maddening thing; their lofty peace and majesty reproach one irritatingly, like a preachy moralist. It is better to be unhappy by the sea.

He urged his horse onto the hard wet sand near the breaker's edge. The beach stretched away gray and desolate through the inrolling fog. The ocean was gray, the shore was swallowed up in grayness. His horse walked distrustfully on the sand, ears twitching back and forth, nostrils quivering with apprehension, head

raised high to stare with great, startled eyes over the glittering sheet of steely waters, or lowered to sniff anxiously at the kelp piled on the sand.

"I should have taken Pat away as soon as this place began to irritate her," he reflected. "If I had humored her a little, I might have won her."

Stan reined in his horse and looked out over the sea. How often he had done this before, waiting on these lonely sands for the sun to rise in its splendor over the mountains and illumine the Pacific. If something could only illumine his soul!

He thought back through the months, searching for some mistake on his part. After his fruitless trip to New York he had gone to a lawyer in Los Angeles, according to his promise, and talked over the necessary steps leading to a divorce; but the next day a telegram from Patricia's father had urged delay, and a long letter following this told of Patsy's broken dream and of her illness. His tenderness and concern for her unhappiness had surged up again and impelled him to go to her; but he had resolutely hardened his will. Had he not done everything in his power to win Patricia and failed? She knew his love was of the enduring kind, and that he desired no other woman in the world. Up to a certain point he could plead, entreat, try to dom-

inate; but only up to a certain point. He had done his best, and, if she wanted or needed him now, she must make the advance. He had shown her definitely that she could always rely upon him. No, he would never seek her again.

Stan turned and rode back slowly into the Montecito hills. Back to the bungalow, the bungalow that had no particular reason for existence any longer. Back to his work, as he had gone back doggedly, so many times through days and weeks that dragged . . . dragged. In his lonely evenings he had sought relief from bitter thoughts in the creation of a new book, *The Valley of the Shadow*, that had grown slowly, since most of his strength was given to movie tasks through the day. Another wild serial that at least diverted him. Even so the book had grown and was beginning to take shape under his unflinching demands upon himself. But what was the use? Another book! What pitiful things books were!

To Louis Tong, his devoted slave and sole companion, Stan expounded his views on life, striding about the big living-room, shirt open at the throat, pipe in a fury of activity, while the immaculately-aproned Oriental listened deferentially.

"Men are conceited fools, Louis Tong, and don't you forget it," explodes Stan. "Why, you

can't pick up a paper without seeing where some meddling parson is worrying about the length of girls' skirts, and lordy! if she hasn't gone and imitated him in smoking cigarettes! Such an immoral creature! Aping *him!*"

Louis Tong blinks. The male of the species, unquestionably superior, is being underrated. Queer creatures, these American men! But he, wise Oriental, smooths his crackling white apron and holds his peace.

"I say we modern men are fools," storms the master. "Why don't we play up to her love of love and really win *love*; not only win it but keep it? We're too lazy and conceited, that's why. We do what we please and want her to be what we please. And it serves us jolly well right when we get stung."

A strong smell of burning potatoes comes from the kitchen. Louis Tong leaps into the air, sniffs dramatically, and dashes from the room.

So the days pass.

.

In spite of all the brave, light talk that passed between them, Louis Tong, with his inscrutable wisdom, knew quite well what purpose was slowly forming in his master's mind and, loyal servant that he was, mourned over this.

"Say, I believe you Orientals have the right idea after all," reflected Stan one evening as he sat on the vine-spread piazza watching the fading sunset. "If things get too hard here, why you don't worry, do you?"

Louis Tong smiled brightly. "Same as chilern—all learn—each one get nes'ary strength—what must be?"

"Exactly—the necessary strength for what must be. That's the dope. We don't have to bear too much, do we, son?"

"All things—can bear," affirmed the little yellow man, his dark eyes burning with deep concern.

Stan was silent for a long time drawing what comfort he could from his trusty briar pipe.

"Come here, Louis Tong. I want to tell you something." The devoted servitor came close and stood waiting. "I don't believe there's anybody in the world cares as much for me—as you do."

"One other, master."

Stan shook his head. "No! You've stood by me through hell—yes, you have and—put it there, friend!"

He held forth his big, sun-burned hand and gripped the slim brown palm of the Chinaman,

at which moment East and West did truly meet.

"Wake me at six. Hamilton's coming at seven. You know we pull that big stunt to-morrow. Great stuff, my boy!"

"Master use double—big jump?" questioned Tong.

"Oh, maybe not. Hamilton wants to put in Morgensten, but Morgy's not very keen about it. Says the timbers aren't shored up strong enough where we take off. That's rot, the timbers are all right."

Louis Tong's unfathomable eyes gripped the speaker.

"Yes, master."

"Another thing, I'm going to write a couple of letters before I go to bed. You'll find 'em on my table. One is for you. The other is—I guess you know who the other is for. See that it's mailed to her."

"Yes, master."

"Good-night."

"Night, master."

Stanley finished a meditative pipe, then shut himself in the den for his letters. In one, using legal phrases, he made a formal gift of the bungalow with its furnishings and six acres of ground

to his faithful servant and friend, Louis Tong.
The last letter was to Patricia.

Having done this, Stan went to bed and slept soundly.

Louis Tong crept stealthily out into the night.

CHAPTER III

THE END OF HIS STRENGTH

AT eight o'clock the next morning a bored company of movie folk, costumed as bandits and hideously grease-painted, were lounging about near the precipitous edges of a mountain chasm that has been used for many a thrilling episode. From this giddy height boulders have crashed down upon unsuspecting heroes; blazing rivers of oil have descended, frantic heroines have been rescued from wild beasts and Indians, in short, all manner of plots and counter-plots have been worked out here, the villains being invariably discomfited in the end while the sorely tried lovers come together happily.

For the climax of this particular "million dollar super-serial" Hamilton Dodd proposed to surpass himself with a triple sensation—a life and death race between an automobile and a train (old stuff!), then the hero's leap with his car across a chasm when he finds the mountain bridge wrecked (this was to be Stan's hair-raising stunt,

if he decided to do the thing himself and not use a dummy); and, finally, a mad dash for an open drawbridge through which the treasure-train and the lovely heroine will plunge to destruction unless the hero arrives in time. Which, of course, he will.

The drawbridge and the roaring river were supposed to be just beyond this mountain chasm, but were really a hundred miles distant (roaring rivers being scarce in California), and that scene had already been taken—the doomed train starting at the open draw and backing away so that no one was ever in the slightest danger, the thrill being produced by showing the picture in reverse-photography. Here at the chasm, however, there was danger enough; this was a real chasm, fourteen feet across with a real descent of two hundred yards to the rocks below.

“If Stan tackles that jump in the car I’ll say he’s crazy,” remarked one of the lolling bandits.

“He’ll do it all right,” insisted another.

“Bunk! Press Agent stuff!”

—“Didn’t he go into the cage with that crazy Rajah?”

“Crazy nothing! The tiger was doped. You watch now and you’ll see a white-faced dummy in Stan Matthews’ clothes make the jump—or try to. But they’ll never get across. You can’t tell me

it's possible to rig up any automatic control that will steer a car straight at sixty. No, sir! They'll smash—sure!”

The others chimed in with various opinions and bets were made on the issue of this adventure.

Meantime, around the curve a mile or so down the trail, Hamilton Dodd, angry and perspiring, was trying to convince his stubborn star that it was both foolish and needless for Stan to think of risking his life in this way. The two had descended from the car, after satisfactory speed tests, and were sitting in the shade (not comfortably, however, for both were on their nerves), talking over the situation.

“Morgy's perfectly willing to do the jump, Stan,” reasoned the fat director. “Don't be a fool, just because—” he checked himself, and studied his friend in anxious irritation. Then he mopped off his face with a large comedy handkerchief.

“Just because—what?”

“Oh, hell! I know what the trouble is, I know how you feel, boy, but—I tell you they're not worth it. No woman is.”

Stan answered impatiently.

“Drop that. How much are you giving Morgy to do this jump?”

"It's none of your business, Stan, but—oh, I'll tell you—double pay and a bonus."

"How much bonus?"

"Five hundred."

"That settles it. I won't have Morgy bribed to take a chance he's afraid of. If he weakens, if his nerve fails—no, sir!"

"Huh!" grunted the big man peevishly. "What if *your* nerve fails? The governor has spent a fortune making a star of you. He's got a right to have you take care of yourself, hasn't he? Where does he get off, if you fall?"

"I'm not going to fall. The governor said I could use my own judgment. He knows it will help the act to have the star really make the jump and not fake it."

"The governor don't know what's in the back of your head. He don't know about Patricia. Come, Stan!"

The director's voice was pleading now and he laid a red hand on his friend's shoulder in rough kindness.

There fell a silence while Dodd waited, not venturing to intrude further upon Creighton's reticence.

"I know you mean well, but you don't understand," answered the star.

"I understand right enough why you want to do this."

"No!"

"You don't care whether the old tub gets across or not. You'd a little rather she didn't."

"Wrong! I'd rather she did."

"Then why not put Morgy in? He'll get her over."

Another silence.

"I'll tell you why, Hammy. I'll give you my real reason. I guess I owe you that."

"You sure do."

"It's a queer mixed-up psychology. It's true I'm sick of the game, I feel as if I haven't got a thing to live for. I'm not like you. All women aren't the same to me. There's only one that I take any interest in or ever will. See? And she's turned me down. So there's nothing left except to—"

He hesitated as he plucked pieces of moss from a tree-root and flung them down.

"What?"

"Bury myself in work or—or in that cañon."

"When the car falls?"

"Yep!"

Hamilton Dodd pondered this.

"That being the case, Stan Matthews," he drawled, "you can see where I, as the fat director

of this aggregation of talent with a million-dollar responsibility, have got to call the whole stunt off."

"No, Hammy! You're going to let me go through with it—if you care about my staying on this bum old earth. It's my one chance."

"Don't get you, Stan."

"Listen!" explained the other wearily. "I'm taking this as the hand of Providence—whether I carry on—or quit. I want to carry on, but—this is a test whether I can—nerve—courage—see? If I get across, I'll live—be glad to. I'll cut out the dumps and never grouch again."

"Honest?"

"There's my hand, but if you don't give me this chance, Hammy, then I—I'll find some other way. There are plenty of ways."

His broken sentences and checked emotion convinced the director in spite of himself.

"You put me in a hell of a position," he scowled. "Say, do you think you can do this stunt? Are you going to try?"

"Yes, I'm going to try. I'll take the curve at forty—that's the only ticklish part of it—then I'll hit her up to fifty-five on the stretch and lift her to sixty-five as we take off. Sixty-five will do it?"

"Sure! The car won't stand any more. Can you hold her steady at sixty-five, Stan?"

"Can I? Yes."

"And you want to do it?"

"Want to do it? I tell you I've *got* to do it."

A last long silence while bluff, tender-hearted Hamilton Dodd did the hardest thinking of his life.

"See here, son," was his last appeal, "why don't you let me use a dummy? Then nobody will get hurt. I understand how you feel about Morgy. I hate to see him take a chance myself—with his wife and baby. And that dummy will go over fine. I've got the engine and steering wheel harnessed up automatically so they can't fail."

"Rot! It's sure to fail. You've got to have a man at the wheel, running at sixty-five. You know it. Besides, I want the test—*myself!* This isn't a stunt for the movies, Hammy, it's the salvation of a man."

CHAPTER IV

THE LEAP

"To give and give and give,
This I know is love at last."

AN hour later Hamilton Dodd, quiet and serious-faced, stepped down from the Ford car that had accompanied the big roadster in the speed trials. The Company crowded about him with eager questions. Where was Stan Matthews? Was he going to make the jump? What had happened?

"He says he's going to do it," answered Dodd, mopping his brow. "Who's got those field-glasses? You, Billy? Come over here. Bring the megaphone."

The two men walked slowly toward a rise of ground a hundred yards to the left, from which point the approaching mountain trail could be followed beyond the curve.

"Looks like there's something doing," remarked one of the Company; whereupon several,

scrambling up, started to follow the director; but he waved them back.

"You people stay where you are," he ordered. "Get ready. I'll give you the signal."

All was excitement now as the bandits disposed themselves at carefully rehearsed points near the shattered bridge and prepared to play their parts as villains in thwarting a hero.

"Wonder if Stan's going to risk it, after all," said one.

"Don't worry. Dodd's kidding us. They'll use a dummy all right," laughed another. "They're not going to let a million-dollar star kill himself."

Meantime Dodd from his rocky height was scanning the trail which curved away to the left at a point that was really about a mile distant, but seemed much nearer in the clear air. At the rate Stan would come, he would cover this mile in seventy seconds or so. Seventy seconds before he would reach the broken bridge.

"I don't like this, Billy," frowned the fat man. "Stan is taking an awful chance." He glanced down into the chasm which fell away beneath them into shivery depths.

His companion was studying the hills on the right, observing a silver speck about a mile and a half away that was moving toward them rapidly,

coming down another mountain road that joined the main trail about five hundred yards ahead.

"Look!" he pointed. "Another car! And hitting it up, too."

Dodd turned his glasses. "I'll say she is, fifty or better. Hello! It isn't our car! I know that gray Hudson with the California top. What the devil—Billy, it's the Chinaman driving. There's a woman in the car! She's leaning out—waving! Good God, it's Stan's wife!"

Stan's wife—yes!

Patricia was coming to her husband, coming as fast as the car would take her. All her doubts had vanished when Louis Tong, after a mad dash of seventy miles the night before, had awakened the Lydig household at five in the morning to tell of his master's desperate purpose. Not a moment did she hesitate, there was only one thing to do and that she did, acting with a strange, quiet fortitude, but promptly. Seventy miles they had raced back through darkness and dawn, over the mountain roads, and would have arrived in time, an hour before this, but for engine trouble . . . tire trouble. Oh, the anguish of it!

And now they were late! In the distance she could see the actors gathered at the bridge. She could see Hamilton Dodd on the hilltop, his

ample figure silhouetted against the sky-line. She could see him lift his megaphone. Dear God, if they could only get there before . . .

"Faster, Louis Tong!" she ordered, and the gray car leaped ahead, rushing on toward the point where the two trails converged into a single, narrow way, a shelf of rock, cut into the face of the precipice, that led to the bridge. If they could reach this junction point before Stan got there, they could block his way. They were only a quarter of a mile distant, they would reach it in fifteen seconds . . .

"Faster!" she cried.

At this moment a dark blue Packard, an open car with no top, shot around the distant curve on the other trail, straightened beautifully in the stretch and came on speeding furiously. There were shouts from the actors.

"It's Stan!"

Dodd caught up his megaphone and bellowed into it: "Everybody ready! Make this big!"

"He's doing fifty-five. Good! . . . Good! Hold her steady . . . steady, boy! What's that fool woman trying to do? Screaming at him! He can't hear her—he's got his cut-out open."

The blue car with its muffler off to cool the engine roared along at fifty-five, lifted its speed to

sixty, then, suddenly to Dodd's dismay, as it passed the V of the other trail, dropped back to fifty-five, to fifty, to forty-five . . .

"Good God!" shouted Hammy. "It can't be . . . he couldn't . . . Oh! . . . Oh!" he groaned as swift developments came so startlingly that they almost stopped his breathing.

The blue car had dropped to forty—or less. Forty would never take them over. What had happened? Had Stan lost his nerve? Dodd seized the megaphone, but Billy stayed his hand.

"No use, old man."

Fifteen seconds before the jump! There was still a chance, if Stan could rally, but—as he described it afterwards, he seemed to be sitting there in a daze. His muscles refused to work. His will was paralyzed. He knew what he ought to do, what he wanted to do, *but he couldn't do it!*

The blue car had slowed down to thirty-five, and Hamilton Dodd looked away, sickened. Three hundreds yards to go! Well, this was the end, he reflected; and Stan was thinking the same, as he sat stolidly at the wheel. After all what did it matter? This settled everything. It was all for the best. Patricia would get his letter and—

An angry horn snarled just behind. What was that? Some idiot trying to pass? On this ten-foot trail? With a broken bridge ahead? Fools!

Then came the miracle. Hammy Dodd and Billy saw it, gasping. The gray car had suddenly gone mad and, passing the V of the two trails, shot ahead so fast behind the other on the single narrow trail that the Packard seemed to stand still. Now thirty feet separated them! . . . now ten! . . . now the nose of the Hudson grazed the Packard's rear fender, as the pursuing car swerved far over toward the edge of the precipice. Automatically Stan hugged the rocky wall on his right—he would give these crazy people every inch there was.

Two hundred yards to the bridge!

Patricia, white-faced, bare-headed, stepped out on the running-board and, clinging to the frame of the top, closed the door behind her.

“Now, Louis Tong!” she called, and the Chinaman responded with a last gallant spurt, opening his throttle wide and swerving to the left until his off wheels skimmed the crumbling edge. He was going to pass, if the gods willed it. The engine quivered like a thoroughbred, then, doing the impossible, reeling over the gulf, crept alongside of the leader, so close that the two running-boards

touched; whereupon Patricia, listening only to the call of her love, cast herself across from one car to the other and fell prone inside the Packard with a wild, inspiring cry: "*Step on her, Stan!*"

Then she fainted.

Who can explain the swift operations of the human mind—its power of instantaneous comprehension and decision? In a flash Stanley understood. Patsy, *his* Patsy, had come to save him. If she could not save him, she would die with him. She would crash down into these depths with him—because she loved him. God! She loved him!

A hundred and fifty yards!

What should he do? In eight seconds they would be there. Eight seconds! The speedometer showed fifty-five. He must have hit up the pace without knowing it. He could lift her across easily now—the engine was going wonderfully. But Patricia? Dared he risk it? There was still time to throw on the emergency. No! The car behind would smash into them. He *had* to go on.

A hundred yards!

"Grind, you devils," yelled Hamilton Dodd, and five movie-operators with hearts in their mouths, ground on. Was there ever such an ending to a serial? Marvelous stuff! Not an inch of it

had they missed, knowing that the story would have to be re-written to fit this new climax. With a new heroine!

Fifty yards!

The speedometer showed sixty-five . . . jumped to seventy-five . . .

A quick glance at Patricia, a deep breath that carried a prayer . . . then Stan gave her all the gas there was and held the wheel steady. A second later they struck the shored-up timbers of the take off and . . .

"By God, sir, she went over like a bird," reported one of the bandits. "Never broke a tire! Greatest picture of the century!"

.
When Patricia opened her eyes, she was lying on a couch in the big living-room at the bungalow. A Chinese quilt covered her. The lamps were lighted. It must be night. And a storm had come up, she could hear it roaring through the hills. How strange! She must have slept a long time. It was the excitement . . . the happiness!

She glanced about the room where everything was familiar, exactly as it had been. Logs were blazing in the fire-place, throwing shadows over the polished boards of the ceiling, over the furniture, over a big leather chair directly in its glow.

Stan's chair! And Stan was in it . . . She could just see the top of his head, that red-brown shock. All the love that she had disciplined for months flooded into her heart, caught at her throat.

"Stan!" she called weakly, and he came to her.

"Oh, Stan! Stan, dear," she murmured.

In a blur of ecstasy she felt herself gathered close in his arms, and a peace that passed all understanding took hold of her heart.

"My dear one—my husband!" she whispered brokenly.

She could feel his heart throbbing out its answer. His strong, dependable arms held her close while she wept in joy. "Keep me," she begged. "Stan, keep me with you—always. I love you. I do love you."

Outside the storm broke. They could hear it beating heavily at the windows—but it was summer in their hearts.

.
And that night before she slept Patricia wrote her father:

"FATHER DEAR: You got Stan's telegram, you know that all is well. In my immense happiness I want to tell you that at the bottom of my locked and stubborn heart, there has abided always, love, admiration and gratitude for my father. But I let the days slip by without telling

you. It is so easy in the rush of selfish living to neglect tenderness to those we love, and youth is cruelly self-confident. How they come back to reproach us—the kindly things we might have said, the thoughtful acts we have left undone!

“Father dear, you wanted to protect me from life, I see it now. You knew that my shining river, dancing and beckoning in the sunshine, was beset with dangers that I could not, would not see! To me it was just one glorious adventure, of which I was determined no one should cheat me. It did not occur to me that you, too, might have sailed the same river as a young man, filled with high hope, high courage and high ideals; that you yearned to save me from unhappiness that you, yourself, must have experienced, for I belonged to you, I was of your own blood, and you knew it.

“I was not stupidly willful. I had an idea that *my life* was to be a thing apart from other women; something brilliant, dazzling, quite alien to woman’s ordinary lot. This blinded me so that I could not see the truth, I could not recognize Stan even when I stood close and looked into his eyes. Wonderful, patient, generous Stan without whom I should have thrown away a reality for a chimera!

“My eyes are open at last. I know that I am not a brilliant solitary whom the world should seek out and applaud, but only a part of a great and wonderful scheme that none of us can now hope to understand. I know that it is not getting, but giving that brings real happiness.

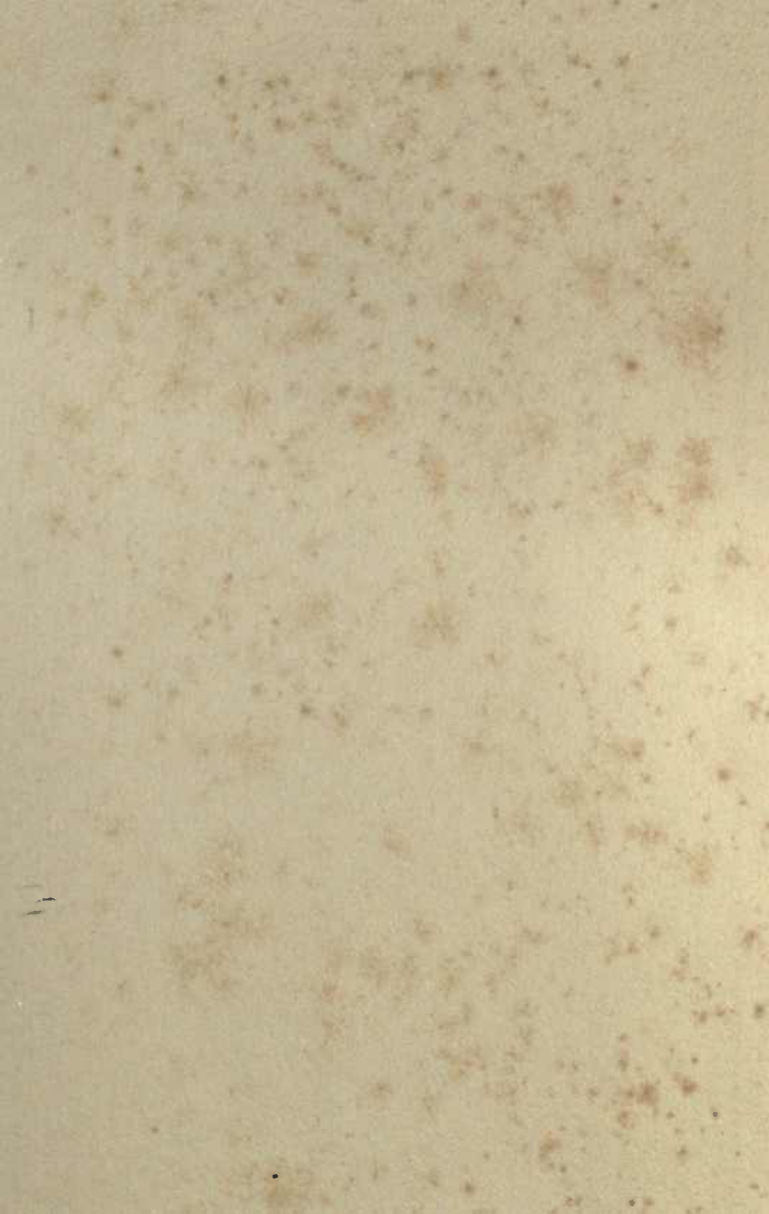
"The doors of our bungalow are impatient to swing wide for you and Mother. Come! Come soon!

"A heart full of love to you both, my dears, from your daughter,

"PATRICIA."

THE END











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